¶ A godly Treatise declaring the benefites, fruites, and great commodities of prayer, and also the true vse therof.

Written in Latin fourtie yéeres past, by an English man of great vertue and learning.

And lately translated into Englishe.

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¶ The Translatour to the Reader.

A Man that lyste diligentlye to consider, and deeplye to weighe the wonderfull chaunge whiche universallye euery age bringeth, and worketh in al worldlye thinges, shall perceyue that it sig-neth in manner not to be the worlde that before it was, but rather (in comparison) the first consummate and ended, a newe substitute and succeeding in the place thereof. And whe that a man lyke to obserue the same in matters of great waight, or els of lesse importance, he shal not want cause to wonder vpon suche mutation in all things. But euery it so, that this chaunge were for the better, then might man fully receyue comfort by the consideration thereof. But alas it is so farre from that, that on the contrarie parte we may beholde in so

many and so often mutations, decay in euery one, & eche one worse then other, and so the last worst of al the rest. Which thing right well appeareth, aswell by diuine as prophane wryters in euery age, amongst whom the Poetes (not without great consideration) esteemed the first to be like golde, the next so decayed that it was from golde abased to syluer, the thirde to brasse, the fourth of lesse price and value, and was become like yron, wherupon they all lament the decay of vertue, loue, and feare of God, decay of charitie, decay of true faith, decay of mutual loue, decay of fidelitie and good conscience, decay of obedience, decay of humilitie, and finally and chiefly decay of deuotion, prayer, and heauenly contemplation, whiche ought to be the rute out of the whiche all the rest should growe and flourishe, as proceeding from a perfect loue and reuerent feare of god: For by the decay thereof, God is not called vpon for his grace and assistance, he is not thanked & prayed for his mercie and great benefites, the rewarde of

his mercy is not desired, the horrible pu-
nishment of his iustice is not feared;
wherby we liue as though we had no
neede of God, and as though we hoped
for no better, nor mistrusted no worse
then we finde here, as though God were
not the rewarder of vertue and puny-
sher of vice, and finally as though there
were no God at all, no resurrection, no
heauen nor hell. So as in this tyme
these olde verses are more then truely
verified here:

Hei viuunt homines tanquam mors
nulla sequatur:
Et velut infernis fabula vana foret.

When liue and yet beleeue not
That death wyl ouertake them:
And paynes of hel they feare not,
For fables they accompt them.

For if god be, why acknowledge not we
his power, maiestie, and omnipotencie,
and honour him thereafter? If God be
mercyfull, why craue we not his mercy?
If God be iuste, why feare we not his
vengeaunce, and begge his pardon? If
God be the spouse of the soule of man,

why we we not loue him: why we we not desirous to be conuersant with him, and continually to delight in him: who is so farre in loue with the soule of man, that if man do but faythfully craue his mercy, pardon, grace, fauour, and assistaunce, he doth lowingly graunte the same, yea, he doth preoccupate and prepare our hartes to call on him, yf we frowardly and wylfully put not awaye and refuse to folowe his holy inspiration, so as of his onely mercy he leaueth no meane to drawe man vnto him, yf he lyste to apply his owne endeuour: Which if it folowe not, then doth man turne the vnmeasurable goodnesse of God, so reiected and refused, to the multiplying of his owne sinne. And then doth the wonderfull vnkindenesse and tota muche vnthankfulnesse of man, vnspeakeably set forth the mercies of God, who wylleth all men to be saued, who restrayneth his grace from no man except he harden his owne harte, eyther by presumption, dispayre, or wicked securitie in sinne, yea who knocketh and

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beateth at the doore of our conſcience, deſireth to enter and dwel with vs, onely he requireth to be let in, and his habitation prepared for him: and yet doth he that him ſelfe to. For if we do but admit him in, he cleanſeth the houſe of our ſoule, yea, he hath already waſhed and made cleane the ſame with the bloud of his deare Sonne, ſo as we vſe the due meanes to applye the ſame vnto vs. But the more God ſeeketh vs, the more we ſhunne him: the more he deſireth vs, the leſſe we care for him: the more we nede him, the leſſe we thinke of him: ſo as he is by our ouergreat vnkindeneſſe and wilfulneſſe, muche more newe wearied, then when he complayned by the Prophete Eſaye of the Iſraelites, ſaying, Laboraui ſuſtinens: I am ouer- Eſai. j.
wearied with bearing, and long ſuffering your ſinnefull life and abhominable dooinges. And therefore this decay muſt nedes be the greateſt whereſoeuer it happen, as by the want whereof, all the reſt conſequently do folowe of neceſſitie, and loſſe of that whiche onely

is to be desired in this lyfe, which is the heauenly comfort of his diuine inspiration, growing to manne by the often consideration of the benefites of Christe, incarnate, crucified, and lyfen again: and not only that, but also the consummation of that ioy and felicitie in heauen neuer to ende. Now for this greatest vertue is decayed, and what cause we haue iustly to lamēt the same, it may wel appeare by this litle treatise written in Latin by an Englishe man, a Bishop of great learning and manifolde vertue of lyfe, suche one as semed perfectly to tast and sauour howe sweete and pleasaunt the spirite of GOD is: Whom in his workes so profoundly doth penetrate the comfort, ioy, and consolation comming by true prayer, that any man reading the same with diligence may easily perceyue what he loseth that frequenteth not prayer: And so farre instructeth al men, not onely to pray, but also so to pray that they lose not ye fruite therof, shewing both howe prayer best pleaseth God, and how it most profiteth

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our selues. And in that his time, more then fourtie yeres passe, lamented, mo-ned, yea cryed out vppon the decay of prayer & contemplation, and the want of the true vse thereof in all degrees, and the louse life of men, and vntowardnesse to prayer, whiche be so frayle, so weake, so peruerse of nature, so beset with dayly enmimies, so prone to the worst, that they ought aswiche as might be, continually to pray, continually to arme themselfe with strength and constancie of the grace of God, to fight with their enimies, synne, the deuyll, the worlde, and the flesshe, weepeth vppon the euill examples of Bishoppes, Priestes, and Cleargie, who shoulde moue other by the perfection of their life, wayleth the hardnes of our hearts, that being wel taught, lyste not to folowe the same, complayneth that the world prayeth not, no nor knoweth what prayer is, nor howe to pray, sheweth howe prayer is abolyshed, and the fruite thereof lost, yea by them that do pray, for that either their prayer is not pure and pleasing

sing God, or els their life and workes disagreeing and contrary. But what go I in hande, to seeme to expresse the particularities of that whiche he so lively, so perfectly, so playnely, and so religiously sheweth and declareth, yea rather the spirite of God, vsing his pen to publishe his holy will to instruct vs. Onely this I haue to saye, that seeing the same in written hande, as it were neglected as a thing of small price, beeing in deede such a worke as the like (I beleeue) hath not often bin written in that matter, I could not satisfie my selfe to see suche a pearle hydden, and suche a iewell throwen and cast away to oblivion, considering first the benefite that maye, and I trust shal growe to the attentiue readers therof, and secondly, remembring howe muche more neede there is of so holy an instruction and heauenly inuitation to prayer and deuotion at this time, than when the same was written. Synce which time hath passed almoste one age of mans lyfe, and in this whyle decay styll, as before, of pitie and vertue,

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and want of the feare of God, and euyll lyfe wonderfullye increased, as in the which the euyll neighbour of mankinde hath ſtollen vppon him, and fynding him negligent, hath ſowen cockle and muche euyll ſeede in the fielde of our ſoules, and hath in maner pulled vp the rootes of good workes, and the holſome and plentifull fruites of repentaunce, fayth, hope, charitie, almes, and true truſt in God. For who in manner sheweth in liuing to feare God? Who is afrayde to offende him? Who refrayneth to blaſpheme his holy name? Who hath conſcience to deceyue, yea, or to oppreſſe his neighbour? Who is aſhamed to lye and forſweare him ſelfe? Who hath compaſſion to releeue the poore, which this plague of God, and want of his grace, hath increaſed out of number? Who taketh any payne to pleaſe God? Who ſeeketh to ſubdue his fleſhe to the ſpirite, ſenſualitie to reaſon, reaſon to fayth, and fayth to the ſeruice of GOD? Yea, who layeth not the bridle of libertie at length freely and

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withoute staye to folowe sinne, and to multiplie the wrath of GOD? Who haunteth prayer? Yea, who shunneth and contemneth it not? Who preferreth the house of prayer before a dising house? Yea, finde we not mōe in thone than in thother? Subiectes rebell agaynst their Prince and God his annoynted, children disobey their parentes, contemne them, and laugh them to scorne, seruauntes little esteeme their maisters, labourers seeke and greedyly folowe ydlenesse, artificers vntruth and too extreme falsehood in their workes; All sortes of men lust after their ease, excesse, and vnruly libertie, no man seeketh to mortifie him selfe, to ouercome his owne frowarde wyll. And the cause of all this is this wonderfull decay of prayer, by the vse whereof we might at the last delight in the familiaritie wyth God and godlye thinges, berauyshed with the loue therof, and so consequentlye growe to the mislyking and hate of sinne, whiche is onely wrought by the loue of vertue, which is onely obteyned

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by true and effectuall prayer, which drineth away the haunting of those enormities aforesayde, whiche prouoke the wrath of God upon the worlde. And who can thinke, that God wyll long suffer this alienation of our selues from him? Yea this contempt of him, thys blasphemie agaynst his holy wyll and name? Who ought not hourely to looke for his visitation and heauy hande of iustice? Who may not rightly say to the world nowe, like as Jonas the Prophet sayde vnto the Niniuites: Adhuc quadraginta dies & mundus subuertetur: There be yet fourtie dayes, & the world shall be destroyed. Whiche saying one thinketh is fully taught to any that shall reade this work, who the weth the fault, the cause of the wrath of God, and the meane to remedie the same, and wyth the Prophete calleth to repentaunce, liuely fayth, feruent charitie, effectuall prayer to appease his indignation, hate of our selues, and loue of God onely, dispysing the worlde, and longing to be with him. Reade therfore this booke, and

reade it with iudgement, with delibe-
ration, with a deepe consideration ther-
of, and with a desire and purpose to
be reformed, make thy harte meete,
and prepare it to receyue fruite of this
godly instruction, let thy hart iudge of
that thine eye seeth, and thy soule reioice
in that thy tongue pronounceth. Reade
it in deede, and not superficially ouer-
looke it. And then surely I can not think
that he that so doth can be defrauded of
the fruite of his labour, or not obteyne
his desired ende thereof: Which I hart-
ily wishe to happen to euery reader
hereof, whereby God may be feared, lo-
ued, glorified, and esteemed by them, and
they thereby rauished and inflamed with
the right vnspeakable loue of him, sweet-
nesse of his holy spirite, admiration of
his omnipotencie, trust of his mercy, and
ioyfull expectation of hys euerlasting
kingdome, which he hath prepared for
all those that walke in his wayes, ob-
serue his lawes, be stedfast in faith, thirst
after righteousnes, thinke long to bee
with him, and by true and faythfull

prayer séeke to be directed in the pylgrimage of this wyldernesse, by the continuall guyding of his holy spirite: To whom be prayse for euer and euer, Amen.

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A Treatiſe vpon theſe wordes of our Sauiour Chriſte.

Oportet ſemper orare.

FOraſmuch as this ſaying of oure Sauiour Chriſte, Oportet ſemper orare, A man muſte alwayes pray, written in the Goſpel of Saint Luke, appertaineth generally vnto all Chriſtian men: who ſeeth not howe profitable and neceſſarie it is for euery man, diligently and effectually to apply him ſelfe to prayer? And ſo expedient and beneficiall a thing, in no wiſe to be neglected, for vayne and hurtfull delectations and pleaſures. Wherefore to the ende that our prayer may ware ſweete and pleaſaunt vnto vs, fyrſt of all it ſhall be very commodious and profitable, to haue ready at hande and in oure remembraunce, certayne reaſons, with the whiche as moſte apte and conuenient motions (as ofte as we Luk. xviij. v. 1

perceyue our selues to ware colde in deuotion, and bée as it were oppressed with a slouthfull vnaptnesse to serue God) we may stirre vp our myndes, and whette our heartes to prayer. Moreouer it shall marueylously profite and exceedingly further vs, not to bée ignoraunt of the singuler fruites and commodities that verye many haue obteyned by prayer. For by the knowledge thereof, we shall the more easyly inuite and prepare our selues to pray: And finally it shal be very néedeful for vs, thoroughly to vnderstand the very true maner whiche is specially required in euery man, to be obserued in the tyme of hys prayer. Forasmuch as in euery worke of any difficultie that man taketh in hand, the right waye of doing thereof béeing once knowen, dothe very muche further the due execution, and perfect finishing of the same. I haue therefore intended by the helpe of God, to intreate in order of these thrée thinges: That is to say, of the necessitie of prayer, of the fruite of prayer,

prayer, and of the true vse and maner of prayer. But forasmuche as the wordes of our Sauiour beforesayde, do cast some scrouple and doubte into manye mens mindes, it shal not be out of purpose for the better vnderstanding thereof, yf wee do first expound and declare, howe those wordes are moste rightly to be vnderstanded. And to begin withall, this saying of our Sauiour is moste assuredly true, Oportet semper orare, for prayer is necessarie vnto vs euery daye, euery howre, and euery minute. And yet dothe not almightie God so seuerely demaunde an accompte thereof of vs, that he byndeth vs to incessaunte prayer with our mouth, whiche thing neuer man hath vnto this time, or coulde be able to obserue. But forasmuche as there passeth no moment of time, in whiche we haue not great nede of the helpe & assistaunce of almightie God: There are we of necessitie constrayned by continual prayer, humblye with all diligence to require and craue his diuine helpe and succour. For who is he that perceyueth not

The three speciall poyntes wherein consisteth the sum of this treatise.

The interpretation of Christes wordes, Oportet semper orare.

(so as he geue hys mynde diligently to obserue the same) that all wee are euen presentlye to be returned to dust and ashes, whensoeuer God shoulde detayne and withholde his hande of helpe from ouer vs, and that there is no man of power without him, to endure the space of one moment of time, as Iob sayth, In eius manu est anima omnis viuentis, In his hande is the life of euery lining creature. Euery one of vs remayneth in no better estate, then as yf he dyd hang in a basket ouer a great deepe pitte, borne vp and sustayned by a corde in the hande of an other man. And in that case doubtlesse, the man so placed, standeth in great neede of the diligent helpe of hym that holdeth the rope, and thereby stayeth him from falling: for yf he once let go the rope, the other that hangeth, muste needes downe headlong into the bottome of the pit. And likewise muste it needes happen vnto euery one of vs, if God sustayne vs not incessauntlye wyth his mightie hande and power. And he it is that so stayeth the rope, that we be not

Iob. xij.

A similitude aptly applyed.

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by the grieuousnes of the fal, bruised and crushed in peces, and forthwith consumed to nothing. I speake nothing nowe of many other daungerous perilles, and headlong falling places, wherewith wee be continually inuironed. What is he then so grosse witted, and so blynde in iudgement, that vnderstandeth not, that there is no tyme, nor no one moment of time, in the whiche we haue not very great neede, earnestly to call vpon God, to require his ayde, defence and succour, and in the whiche we haue no cause incessantly to pray? But forasmuch as after this vnderstanding and sense, there is no man that by actuall prayer (as we cal it) doth satisfie and fulfyll the same wordes of our Sauiour, that is to saye, euery moment to continue in prayer: Therefore we had neede to searche out some other sense and meaning thereof. And in deede this saying of our Sauiour Christ, may rightly be otherwise vnderstanded: As thus, A certayne Monke, one of the olde fathers, beeing demaunded howe he fulfilled that saying of com

maundement of Christ, Oportet semper orare, made this aunswere: When I haue (sayeth he) finished and sayde my dayly prayers, the time that remayneth I vse to bestowe in labouring with my handes, as farre forth as the habilitie and strength of my body doth permitte, whereby it commeth to passe, that dayly I gayne somewhat, with the whiche I may releeue, not onely my selfe, but also some other poore people. And they (sayeth he) pray for me, as ofte as by the vnquietnesse and trouble of my body, I can not pray for my selfe. And by this meane he dyd beleeue that he satisfied the commaundement. And he had the holy scripture agreable with his opinion, whiche sayth, Absconde Eleemosinam in sinu pauperis, & ipsa pro te orabit, Hyde thy almes in the bosome of the poore, and that shal pray for thée. Sée then, howe the holy Scripture confirmeth that our almes doth pray for vs: and therefore, yf a man apply his mynde to shew mercy and pitie to his neighbours, yf he sèke to defende the Orphanes and fatherlesse chyl-

Eccle. xxxi.

childzen, if he labour to comfozte the wy-
dowes whiche be deſtitute of all conſola-
tion, if he be careful to deliuer thoſe that
be oppzeſſed with violence, from iniury
and wzong: Finally, yf he ſhewe hym
ſelfe redy to helpe to his power, any that
want ſuccour oz releefe, ſo that beſydes
all this he neglect not the ozdinary ap-
poynted times foz pzayer, by the Church
of God, he maye well be iudged to haue
fulfilled the fozmer wozdes of our Sa-
uiour. Foz that man doth pzay alwayes
eyther by him ſelfe, oz els by his almes
and charitable dædes, whiche ſupplyeth
al the want that appeareth in his owne
pzayer. In this wyſe then, maye the
wozdes of Chziſte afozeſayde be vn-
derſtanded, wherein he teacheth vs al-
wayes to continue in pzayer, whiche is
as muche to ſay, as alwayes to lyue and
dw well, whiche doth ſometime happen
to menne, yea when they be ſlæping.
Foz as often as we dw ſlæpe oz wake,
walke oz ſit ſtyl, eate oz dzinke, be ber-
ed, oz be in quyet, oz what els ſoeuer
we dw oz ſuffer, yf all theſe dwinges

be ioith a true fayth referred to the honour and glory of God, No doubt they appertayne to the increase of a good and perfect lyfe. For if it were not so, Saint Paule woulde not haue wylled the Corinthians, that whatsoeuer they did, they shoulde intende and direct the same to the glory of God, saying vnto them,
1. Cor. x. Siue editis, siue bibitis, siue quid aliud facitis, omnia in gloriam dei facite. Whether ye eate, or drinke, or what thing els soeuer ye doe, do al to the honour of God. And surely, if God be moued with our wordes and speaking, to be gracious vnto vs, hys wyll be muche more styred to the same by our good workes and well doing, forasmuche as workes doe notwe supply the place of wordes. And therefore the fauour of GOD is turned towardes vs by our good workes, whiche we doe to this ende, and of purpose to please his diuine Maiestie: For they doe expresse the vehemencie of prayer, and that muche more mightily then the prayers them selfe. Therefore whosoeuer referreth all that he dothe or suffereth,

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onely to the glory of GOD, hée surely prayeth continuallye, and dothe at all times satisfie this aforesayde precept of Christe. For wée may iustly saye, that he doth continue alwayes in prayer, which alwayes directeth his workes and dwinges to the honoure and glory of God. But albeit this saying, Oporter semper orare, maye bée vnderstanded in thys sence: Yet notwithstanding, because Christ hath of purpose appoynted a difference betwéene praying and working, and declareth a great diuersitie betwene almes, prayer, and fasting: Therefore wée shall nowe adde vnto these two, a thirde vnderstanding of the same.

Saint Paule doeth admonishe the people of Thessalonica, that they shoulde pray incessauntly, saying, Sine intermissione orate. And in many places of his Epistles, he declareth that he dyd without ceassing, remember diuers in his prayers. Moreouer, in the Actes of the Apostles it is written, that whylst Peter was deteyned prysoner and in captiuitie, the Churche of GOD made conti- Cap.v. Actes.xij.

continual prayer, and intercession for hym. By the whiche wordes it is manyfest and apparaunte, that euerye true Christian man doeth pray in euery action and worke he doeth, yea although he sleepe. The whiche thing can not be true in any wise, except we do by prayer vnderstande the continuall desire of the harte, whiche is alwayes strong, and hath his continuall motion in mannes mynde. For like as a man beeing bounde in prison with waightie fetters of yron, is compelled by the tedious weerynesse of those miseries and afflictions whiche he indureth, vehemently to desire, and earnestly seeke for libertie, and yf hee haue once conceyued anye maner of hope of his deliueraunce, he then incessauntly longeth, wysheth, and desireth to be losed from those paynefull bandes: Verylye, euen so euery Christian man (which is not ignoraunt, howe greeuously and fearcely he is inuaded and dayly assaulted by the flesshe, the worlde, and the Deuyl, and howe diuers and manifolde miseries and calamities he sustayneth in this

this vale of wretchednes, to howe many, and therewyth howe greate perilles and dayly daungers his lyke is subiected and sette forth) is inforced euery moment to desire the ayde and helpe of GOD his grace, by the whiche, at the laste he beīng deliuered from those calamities and greate euylles, maye ascende into the beautifull sighte and beholding of GOD him selfe, and the moste happie fruition of euerlasting felicitie. And this earnest desire is in the Scripture oftentimes vnderstanded for a loude crye in the eares of Almightie GOD: As where the Prophete sayth, Desiderium pauperum exaudiuit dominus, GOD hath harde the vehement desire of the poore. For doubtlesse, the earnest desire of those that be vexed and punished in minde and soule, doth spedylye breake in, and maketh a ready way to the presence of God him selfe, and rayseth a wonderfull outcry and noyse into his eares: and therefore forasmuch as suche and the lyke desire neuer ceasseth in the hartes of good men, but is

Psal. ix.

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continually occupyed, and mooued by grace, so that they do alwayes desyre and long for the succour and ayde of God his mighte and power, and that whether they slepe, wake, eate, drinke, or whatsoeuer thing els they do, these men may iustly be iudged alwayes to pray, and that without any intermission. For the declaration whereof, Saint Augustine sayeth thus, Sine intermisione orare, quid aliud est, quam beatam vitam, sine intermisione desiderare. Semper hanc à domino desideramus, & oramus semper. To praye (sayth he) without ceasing, what els is it, than incessauntlye to desire of God to leade a good and honest lyfe? Let vs alwayes craue and begge this grace of God, and then we do alwayes pray. Thus farre Saint Augustine. And without this hartie desire, it is not any noyse or sounde of wordes, be it neuer so long, that can styrre vp the eares of almightie God. But yf that be feruent (although there be no sounde of any one worde harde) it doth most easily penetrate, and obtayneth vndelayedlye

S. Aug. in the. Cxxi. Epistle ad Proban. the. ix. chapter.

lye a through and gracious audience, at the hande of God, as shall more largely and playnely be shewed afterwarde. Therefore whosoeuer shal in this wyse vnderstande the worde of our Sauiour aforesayde, in my iudgemente, shall thinke moste rightly. And in another sence, a man can not easely conceyue howe he may, or is in any wise able continually without ceassing to pray: But by the feruencie of this desire, whiche is neuer quenched in the hartes of good men, prayer is alwayes and incessantly made before God, and we do continually knocke at the gates of the mercy of God, begging of him his grace and diuine assistaunce. It is therfore very true whiche Christe our Sauiour dyd saye, Oportet semper orare, We muste alwayes pray, and neuer geue ouer. And yet not so that we be bounde alwayes to vtter any certayne prayer, conceyued and made in any forme of wordes: but so that there passe no minute of time, in the which we do not desire the succour of his grace, and the felicitie to come. Luk. xviij.

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But forasmuche as occasion serueth to speake somewhat more of this matter afterwarde, it shal be good in the meane time to shewe forth certaine reasons, by the whiche (yf we apply any diligence) we may quicken our selues, when we are dul, and rayse vp our myndes to prayer, as oft as we lyst.

¶ The first Reason.

AND this one thing ought specially to moue vs to deuotion, forasmuche as our prayer is like vnto a certayne corde or chayne of golde, let downe from Heauen, with the whiche we labour to drawe almightie God vnto vs, when in deede we be therewith drawen by hym. For it is manye tymes séene, that yf a man béeing sette on an high place, be desirous to pull vp an other

that

that standeth farre vnder him, he throweth straight downe a rope vnto hym, the whiche he pulleth vp agayne with all his might, and by that meane at the laste the other is drawen vp. The lyke, and suche a rope or chayne doth holy Saint Denis call prayer, whiche is verily let downe from Heauen euen vnto vs, and by God him selfe fastened vnto our hartes.

And there is no man that prayeth truely and as he ought to do, but by the inspiration of almightie God, for of our selues, as Saint Paule sayth, we be not able, so mutche as to thinke a good thoughte, and therefore the goodnes of God sendeth downe his chayne vnto vs, to the ende that continually holding our hartes fastened vnto the same, at the laste we may be lyfted vp to heauen, vnto the presence of our Lorde God. But let vs open this matter in hande yet more at length. When a man shal with diligent examinution ponder and waigh, on the one syde the exceeding goodnes, pitie, and mercyfulnes of God: on the other ij. Cor. iij.

other side, his owne weakenes, great necessitie, and extreme miserye, then can he not be but compelled continually to preasse, laboure, and trauayle, to come to the presence of the Lorde God, his moste gracious Creatour and his onely defendour: Lyke as the king and Prophete Dauid doth say, Quæsiui vultum tuum, vultum tuum domine requiram. I haue sought to come vnto thy sight, O Lorde, to thy sight, O Lorde, I wyll continually trauayle to attayne. And when he perceyueth and beléeueth him selfe to be nowe come and admitted to the sight of God, then vnfoldeth he and layeth forth his owne miseries, then runneth he to the remembraunce of hys former feruent desires, then dothe he deuoutely and with a godly affection, bewayle hys owne state, and then doth he craue with great compunction of harte, and wyth plentie of bytter teares, begge of hys mercy, grace and continuall assistaunce, to helpe him in his great néede and necessitie, not to leaue and forsake him in trouble and aduersitie, but to vouchesafe

also

also to graunt him his helpefull grace, whereby he myght in al thinges please his diuine maiestie. And whilst the soule of this man is thus occupied, what o ther thing is he in hande withall, then to be drawen vp to his Lorde God, by the theine and rope of prayer, then to be united sweetely and made one with his maker and Sauiour, then to ioyne his will and vnderstanding with that incomprehensible light of the maiestie of God: What other, I say, then to make him selfe of one minde & affection, with his incomparable clemencie & goodnes, and finally to extol and exalt himselfe aboue al worldly creatures, to this ende, that at the last his soule may be made one with his lord god, being (as it were) linked together with that true golden cheyne of prayer. Lo nowe what maner of bonde prayer is. O rope, more then golden, and cheyne to be with all mans desire and affection sought for and required. O bonde of loue, most sweete and delectable, who would not wyllingly offer him selfe to be tied and tethered

with this moste pleasaunt corde? Who
woulde not be harde bounde and fastned
in this so riche and noble a chayne? Or
finally, who woulde not with al the po-
wers of his soule and body, wyshe and
desire to repose him selfe in reste and
quiet betweene the armes of so louing a
Lorde and mightie king? Doubtlesse,
this onely thought and meditation may
suffise, (if it be diligently waygbed, fo-
lowed, and considered, to quicken, in-
flame, and set on fyre the dullest man,
and most colde in vertue and deuotion,
to frequent this benefite, and to seke the
grace of God by prayer, specially for
that euery man, be he neuer so extreme
and wretched a sinner, maye and ought
to hope assuredly, that albeit the maie-
stie of God is of a supereminent and vn-
speakable dignitie, yet is he so gracious
so mercyfull, and so mylde vnto man,
that he refuseth not to incline his moste
pure and holy eares, vnto our prophane
and vncleane prayers, so as we wante
not a stedfaste mynde to resist sinne and
impietie. For God is so redie, so incli-
nable,

nable, and so wel disposed to take mercy on vs in that case, and doth so intierlye loue our soules, that albeit he be the supreme mediator, ruler, and only Lord and gouernour of the whole worlde, and we nothing but vncleane filthy dust and moste vyle ashes, yet doth he not contemne our poore and meane state, nor shunneth not vs, or fleeth from vs for our former euyls, of the which we haue and do truely repent vs, be they neuer so great, but is forthwith attentiue, and geueth eare to our pitiful lamentation, wayling, and sorowfull sighing, is moued with our teares, hath compassion of our miseries, condescendeth to our petitions, yea & also (which much more is) doth preuent our request with his grace insomuch that before we begin to pray, he moueth & stireth vs vp vnto the same. O inestimable charitie of our Lord god, O clemencie incomparable. Our Lorde God is so farre in loue with our soules, that he studieth howe he may most pleasantly inuite & allure vs, and laboreth by al meanes to driue vs to attende & geue

our selues ouer to the contemplation & beholding of his beautyful lighte and bryghtnesse, to taste the sauour of his wonderful swætenesse, to imbrace the aboundaunce of his plentyful liberalitie, and finally, louingly to kysse the vnspeakable pleasures of his glorious face. Alas howe wretched be they that labour not to their power to be drawen in this pullye and come at this cal? And howe muche more miserable are those, which beeing once drawē into that most pleasaunt way, walke not in the same, and folowe not it? But howe farre most wretched of al other, and vnhappie be they, which after al those callinges and drawing of the grace of God, do wyllingly drawe backe, refuse the cal, striue and rebel agaynst the vnspeakable clemencie of our so gracious and almighty Lorde God? Thus muche touching the first reason.

The

The seconde Reason.

AND nowe let vs shewe forth an other reason, whiche maye eftsones moue and styrre oure myndes to prayer. It is apparaunt and wel knowen that the principal and cheefe goodnes belonging to man, is called & esteemed the true perfection of eternal felicitie, the which is appoynted by God vnto man, for his laste ende. But no man can be able to reach and atteyne to this ende, without suche ordinarie meanes as God hath appoynted to leade vs vnto the same. And amongest many other meanes there be two, whiche if a man once perfectly haue obteyned, he shall not lightly want the rest, which be also necessarie for the obteyning of this beatitude: and those veryly be prayer and good workes. In those two meanes we reade in the Actes of the Apostles, that

Cornelius the Centurion was moste commonly exercised, by the whiche he so pleased God, that albeit he was an Ethnicke and infidel, yet was it sayde vnto him by the Aungel of God, Orationes tuæ, & eleemosinæ tuæ, ascenderunt in memoriam coram deo: Thy prayers and almes dædes haue ascended into the sight of God, and are remembred of him. Acte. x.

Therefore he that wyll exercise himselfe in these two, that is to say, in prayer and good workes, he shal surely neuer want the rest, which be the other guydes to eternall felicitie. For Gods wyll is, that we should humiliate and deiect our selues in the sight of his maiestie, vtterly confessing and acknowledging that of our owne power and strength it is impossible that we should do wel, but that a good lyfe (whiche is continued in the practise of good workes) is to be craued at his hande by continual prayer. And that by these meanes we may at the last ascende and come vnto this last appointed ende for man, which is eternal felicitie with God. And therfore, forasmuch

as

as without the benefite comming of the vse of good workes, no man attayneth to this appointed last ende for man, and also that the grace of good life can in no wise be obtained without prayer, I conclude, that if we minde not to fall into eternall miserie, we muste continually frequent this prayer. And nowe let no man obiect vnto me in this case, the foolish, peeuish, and beastly argument and persuasion of the prescience of almighty God, which can not be deceiued, and yet some there be that sayeth thus, God foreseeth and assuredly knoweth al that euer shall happen after, before it be eyther thought or done by man: And nowe vndoubtedly he knoweth that either I shal be saued in ioy & felicitie, or damned to perpetual torments & miserie. But if he knowe I shal be saued, what neede haue I to pray for that I am already assured of, and shal haue it without any maner of prayer, euē only by theffect of the prescience of God, whiche can not be deceiued. On the other side, if he by his foreknowledge perceyue me to be damned, no prayers in the world are able to profit

me, forasmuch as his prescience can not be disappointed or chaunged. Verely, this croked dilemma, or false subtyle argument, hath seduced very many, but howe very a sophistical fallax it is, we shal shewe and declare afterward much better, yf we do first make prowfe, howe the same argument is vtterly voyde, standeth not, nor hath any consequence, in all other thynges whiche dayly do happen and chaunce vnto vs. As for example. He that is vexed with any greuous sickenes, shal he admitte no Phisicke to be applyed and ministred vnto him, saying, God knoweth before whether I shal recouer health, or dye? If he know the first, then neede I no phisicke, for so without doubte I shall be healed without any maner of medicine, onely forasmuche as the knowledge of God can neuer be deceyued: But if he know that I shal perishe and dye of this sickenes, what good shall my medicine do me, where as that can in no wyse be made voide and frustrate, which he foreseeth? Thou mayst now see by this same very

A notable example agaynst reasoning of the prescience of God.

very argument, al the arte of phisicke and benefite thereof destroyed: Let vs proue howe wel it wyl stande in an other. The husband man wyl say, I wyl not sowe, tyl, and husbande my ground, knoweth not GOD whether this fielde shall without my labour bring forth plentie of fruite, yea or nay: But yf he knowe it shal so do, then needeth it not my trauayle and paynefull husbanding: If otherwise, I shal but labour in vayne. And by this argument destroy also al maner of husbandrie, and tylthe of the earth. The like successe and conclusion shalbe founde in al other comparisons, if they be in the same maner sorted & compared together. And therefore by these it is very apparaunt and manifest, that the firste supposed reason is of no validitie, but vtterly false and deceitfull: For if it might be true, then were it by the same reason neyther needefull nor wysedome for the sicke to seeke phisicke, nor the husbande man to labour to manure and tyll his grounde. Wherefore, as the husbande man may not loke

for fruite of his fieldes except he tyl and sowe, neyther yet the sicke man atteine his health except he be content tofolow the aduice of his phisition: Euen so can no Christian man atchieue the fruition of perfect felicitie, vnlesse he firste haue the grace of God to lyue wel, and thereunto can he not at any time come without the helpe and meane of continual & faythful prayer. And like as we do most commonly see for trueth, that those sicke men must needes perishe that refuse the medicines, counsel, & aduise of their phisitions, and that those fields be without all doubte barreyne and fruitlesse which want manuring and good husbanding: Euen so may we be well assured, that without prayer & good workes, it is not possible for vs to obteyne euerlasting felicitie. And therefore, albeit that God hath ordeyned that eternal beatitude, as the supreme & last ende to all good men, yet was it not his wyl that man should atteyne vnto the same, but by suche iust meanes as he had appoynted. And therfore, first and principally, if a man do

not

not first begin with a good lyfe, let him neuer loke to end with that glory which is to come, and therewith let no man thinke to obteyne the grace to lyue wel, except he do by dayly and continuall prayer, craue & begge the same of God. Begin therfore we muste with prayer, from the whiche no doubte wyl folowe good lyfe, by the whiche we shall at the laste be brought to the glorious blisse of heauen, euen vnto the present sight and fruition of the omnipotent maiestie of God him selfe, the want whereof is the most extreme losse and miserie, whiche doth most manifestly appeare by the vnsatiable desire of our mindes. For we seeke in euery corner a felicitie whiche may satisfy vs and fulfil our desires, and we folishly thinke that it may be gotten eyther of worldly pleasures, of ryches, of honours, or at the least, of them al ioyned together, whereby it foloweth, that we neuer make an end in desiring and seeking for them, yea & for the getting of them groweth the disturbance of al good orders, and the confusion of al thinges

through

through the worlde: And yet when we haue them, there is nothing in them that can or is able to satisfie our minds, forasmuche as they be with none other thing satisfied, saiuing only the supreme felicitie and glory of God. Haue we not then great cause, by all meanes and wayes possible, to seeke and trauayle for the beholding and fruition of this ioye and felicitie, when by the want therof we fall presently into perpetual calamitie and miserie? But forasmuche as the only redy and allowed high way to bring vs to that iourneyes ende, is good lyfe, and the only way to good lyfe is prayer, it followeth necessarily, that all those that are loth and unwilling to waute and lose that most happie fruition, must willingly frequent and applye themselues to this aforesayde pure and continual prayer. And this may nowe suffise for the seconde reason.

The

The third Reason.

FOR a thirde reason, it shal marueylously moue vs, if we do call to our remembraunce that we be put in minde and cõmaunded by the mouth of Christe him selfe, to be alwayes ready and willing to pray, in these his wordes, Oportet semper orare. For who was better able directly to instruct vs in those thinges that shoulde further our salvation, then God the sonne of almightie God the father, in whom the same God the father hath reposed the treasures of his wisedome and knowledge, and whõ he sent downe into the worlde, to this ende, to shewe the same whole worlde a right way to heauen? Or who coulde with greater zeale and more earnest affection, studie to teache vs the same waye, than he that for the vnspeakable loue whiche he did beare vnto vs, willingly

lingly sustayned the moste bitter, shamefull, and horrible death of the Crosse: And he did not onely admonishe vs of the necessitie of continual prayer, but he did also promise that we shoulde obteyne any thing that by true & earnest prayer we should require, saying, Petite & accipietis, querite & inuenietis, pulsate & aperietur vobis: Aske and ye shall haue, seeke and ye shal finde, knocke and it shal be opened vnto you. This promise was made by the mouth of Jesus Christ the sonne of God, who is trueth it selfe, & seduceth no man: Let vs therfore with an assured confidence approch vnto the throne of his great clemencie, where we may both dayly pray for the grace to line and do wel, and also for a constant vnmoueable perseueraunce in good workes, nothing doubting but he wyl muche more liberally imparte the same vnto vs, than we can be able eyther to require or thinke of. Wherefore forasmuche as he hath taught vs the necessitie of prayer, and that we must alwayes continue in the same, no man

Luke. xj.

ought

ought to doubte, but that according to his lesson, the same is for vs moste necessary and expedient. And therefore it is so requisite for vs Christian men that wander amongest the miseries of this worlde, farre from the face of our Lorde God, to obey, folowe, and practise this healthfull and profitable commaundement of our Sauiour Christ, that whosoeuer determineth with him selfe, that he wyll not pray, or maketh an obiecte and let in his owne minde agaynst prayer, sinneth damnablye and to death: yea and he that is ouer negligent to frequent prayer, hauing often opportunitie, and specially séeing the peryl of his saluation to depende thereon, that negligence may be deadly, albeit negligence in his owne sence and vnderstanding is no mortal crime, but lesse or greater according to the qualitie thereof. But yf we woulde somewhat more diligentlye search forth and discusse the perfect meaning of the aforesayd wordes of Christ, we shoulde playnely sée howe greate the necessitie of prayer is. Doubtlesse

the health of euery Christian dependeth principally of God, of whom of necessitie (as hath bene sayde) euery man muste require the same. And because this our health may be euery moment in daunger, and that there is no man whiche is not bounde to prouide and take care for his owne health: It foloweth necessarily, that euery moment we haue present nede to pray and call to God. For inasmuche as our health can neyther be obteyned nor continued at any other hand than by GOD him selfe, it appeareth what nede we haue continuallye to exalte our eyes to heauen, and alwayes our hartes to God, and that not only for our selues, but also for the health and wel doing of our neighbours, whiche we are also bounde to do. For lyke as euery man is bounde to succour his neibour when he seeth him trauayled with pouertie and miserie, and suche other wantes in his body: Euen so is he much more bounde, when he seeth any peril & losse lyke to fal to his soule, and the immunent & manyfest daunger of the losse

of

of the spiritual health, and comfort therof. But nowe specially there lyeth vpon vs a much greater necessity of prayer then euer before, seing the time so ful of daungers, the number of sinners so wonderfully increased vpon the earth, and so great an increase of sinne and wickednes, in our age, as hath not heretofore bene seene. For now in this wretched time and age we liue in, sinnes be reioyced at, as though they were good deedes, and honest workes are esteemed for great sinnes and enormities, now is it wel done and commendable to sinne, and contrary great sinne and shame to do wel. Wo be vnto vs, that be borne and lyue in this wretched time, in the whiche (I speake it not without sorowe and teares) whosoeuer (beeing indued with any zeale towardes the honour of God) shall caste his eyes on those men and women, whiche nowe liue and remayne, shall easily be moued to lamentation and mourning, beholding euery thing tourned and turmoyled vpside downe. The moste beautifull order of

vertue and honestie, vtterly destroyed and confounded, and the liuely lighte and example of honest liuing clerely extinguished, banyshed, and put out of memorie and al knowledge: And almoste none other thyng nowe leste in the Churche of Christe, but eyther manifest iniquitie, or counterfeite holynesse. For now amongst the ministers of the same Churche, the great light of their example in vertuous and holy liuing, is almost vtterly extinct, who were wonte, and in deede ought styl, lyke lightes to the worlde, to shine in vertue and godlynes, and should shewe them selues to all men, as spectacles worthy the beholding and set to the shewe vpon an highe hyll, and like the bright candle set vppon and aboue the bushell, and not hydden and vnworthy of sight. And nowe there commeth no light from them, but rather an horrible mystie cloude or darke ignorraunce, and a pestilent infection therin, with the which innumerable being deadly infected, are dayly drawen to their destruction. O miserable estate of ours, O

time

time most worthy bewayling, into the which most vnfortunately our deare and holy mother the Churche, the spouse of Christ, is fallen, whiche doth now so little esteeme the moste precious bloud of her moste louing spouse, Iesus Christe: Yea, and lyke an inchaunted woman, nothing regardeth nor reputeth of any moment, that moste excellent price wherewith she was so exceeding louingly and dearely redeemed. If this consideration did sometime fall into mens hartes, it woulde and aught of right to compel vs, beeing humbled in mynde, and truely penitent in hart and soule, to knocke and beate with violent and continual faythful prayers, the gates of the mercy of God, not for our selues alone, but to recouer both our owne health, and our neighbours, whom wee maye nowe see standing in a moste miserable condition and state, brought to extreme necessitie, & beeing nowe in the present perill and almost vnauoydable daunger of the losse of their soules, and recouery thereof is none at all, but onely

by continuall and effectual prayer, so rowefullye and hartyly requyring the present pardon, succour, and comfort of almightie God.

The third Reason.

FInallye, the fourth and last reason may be in this wise deduced: There liueth no man of the substance of the commune frayle flesh, that hath not sinned, and is assured he shall sinne agayne. The which beeing true, it shal be very necessary vnto vs, for either of both these faultes, to inuocate and call vpon our almightie and most mercifull Lorde God, with continual prayers, not onely to forgiue and pardon our former sinnes and offences passed, but also that by his omnipotent ayde & almighty assistance, we fal not agayne, either in the same, or others, by the occasion wherof we might incurre and fall into eternall and euer-

lasting

lasting payne and punishment. And first there is no man that knoweth him selfe to haue sinned, which is assured and certayne that he hath as yet recouered the fauour of God, excepte the same be by some meanes reuealed to him by God: of the whiche thing Salomon wryteth thus, in his Booke named Ecclesiastes: Eccle.ix. Sunt iusti & sapientes, & opera eorum in manu dei, & tamen nescit homo vtrum amore vel odio dignus sit, sed omnia in futurum reseruantur incerta: There be (sayth he) both wise and iust men, and the doinges of them remayne in the hande of God, and yet knoweth no man whether he stande in the grace or indignation of God. But al those iudgementes be reserued in the secret knowledge of him selfe vnto the ende. And to this ende be al mens dedes reserued to the last iudgement of god, because there can nothing be hidden, couered, or kepte secrete, neyther shal the least thought be vnknowen vnto that seuere Iudge, that euer crept into the soule of man. But albeit no man can be assured by his owne

knowledge in this state of life, that he standeth and remaineth in the fauour of God, yet by certayne coniectures he may assuredly beleeue it, specially if he know him selfe free from any deadly sinne, of the whiche he hath not already repented him selfe, and eyther confessed him selfe, or els purposeth assuredly to confesse the same to his ghostly father in time conuenient: And therewith if he finde him selfe apte, ready, and willing to the doing of those thinges, wherewith God his honour may be aduaunced, yf he delight in hearing of the holy and sacred worde of God read and preached, yf he seeke to be often present at the diuine seruice and prayse geuing to the name of God: And finally, if he intende as farforth as he may, to abstayne and flee from thencefoorth, from al contagious corruption of sinne: Verily this man may assuredly beleue that he is and consisteth in the state of grace, and in the fauour of God. But to knowe this assuredly no man shal be able, except he be illuminate with some other speciall light

of

of knowledge and reuelation. And therfore for this cause it shall be necessary for all men to contayne and keepe themselues within the limittes & bounds of some reuerent feare, and to continue knocking at the gates of the mercy of God, by importune prayer, trauayling for his grace and fauour. And this feare is taught and perswaded vnto vs by holy Scripture, where it is written, De propiciato peccatorum noli esse sine metu: Be not out of feare, and altogeather carelesse of thy sinnes forgiuen. And surely this feare shall do so muche good to man, that if the sorowe he hath already taken for sinne, be not sufficient, nowe the goodnes of God allowing this reuerent feare, accepting the feruent prayer that groweth from the same, it shall plentifully satisfie & appease the wrath of God, for all our sinnes and offences agaynst him. But if we did graunt that there were some man that had assured knowledge of the full and absolute forginenes of his sinnes, and that he knew him selfe nowe perfectly reconsiled to Eccle. 5.

God, and admitted to his fauoure, yet hath he good cause to feare, least by some euil happe, he do fal from that state, forasmuch as there is no man so established in the grace of God, but it is possible he may fal from the same: For the whiche cause Saint Paule writeth to the Romaines, saying, Tu autem fidestas, noli altum sapere, sed time: Be it so that thou be strong in faith, yet be not thou proude and high minded therefore, but feare. Whiche is as muche as if he had sayde, If a man perceyue him selfe by his faste fayth to stande in the fauour of God, let him not therefore presume ouermuche of himselfe, but rather feare and mistrust his owne frailnes, forasmuch as he may easyly fall from the same perfection of grace and the fauour of God. For in this life no man ought to warrant and assure him selfe, and liue thereby out of feare, whiche is also by the same Apostle testified in his Epistle to the Corinthians, Qui se existimat stare, videat ne cadat, He that supposeth him selfe (sayeth he) to stande faste and sure, let him take

Rom. xi.

1. Cor. x.

good

good hede, and be well ware that he fall not. Wherefore it shal be necessarie for vs to eleuate and lyfte vp both our eyes and handes towardes heauen, and demaunde of God by incessaunt prayer, that it woulde please him to graunt vnto vs the grace of perseueraunce, to continue in the exercise and obseruation of his wyll and pleasure, least that by the faynting and fayling therein, we might after fall from that our former happie state of his grace and fauour. For we do reade of many, which lately stode like mightie pillers in the Churche of God, and shined therein like lightes appoynted to beautifie the same, glistering therin with the wonderful brightnes of vertue and holynes: But for that they conteyned not them selues within the limittes of reuerent and humble feare, they fell downe headlong into the bottomlesse pitte of al euyl and mischiefe, not onelye to their owne harme and shame, but with the hurt and destruction of many others, whiche thing (were it not that I shoulde be tedious) I

mighte confirme by the testimonies of many, as wel holy doctours, as credible Hystoriographers. But to our purpose, by that whiche is already sayde, it is playne and apparaunt ynough, that euery man hath nede to pray continually, as well to obtayne pardon and forgiuenes of his sinnes past, as to auoyde the perillous daungers of suche euylles as be imminent towardes him. And nowe (as I suppose) it is sufficient to haue remembred these foure reasons to proue the necessitie of prayer. We wyl therefore accordyng as we tofore haue promised in the seconde part, somethyng say of the great fruite and wonderful commoditie that groweth to man by prayer.

¶ Of

¶ Of the three cheefe and principal fruites of Prayer.

BVT albeit those reasons before mentioned seeme very strong and wel able to moue the mindes of men to prayer: yet are there many slow, dull and vnapt to performe this bonde of duety. The cheefe cause why, is, because they doo not tast nor sauour the pleasauntnesse whiche many vertuous deuout men many times do fele in prayer. And they wyl say, that willingly they would pray, so as they might once tast of ỹ swetnes which they heare some other do finde in prayer. But these men remẽber not, that the swetnes of prayer can not be had where praier is not, & therfore to be obteined by frequent vse therof before, & then afterward they may assuredly loue for the pleasant swetenes which growēth therby. And in dede it is ỹ long vse & daily continuance of prayer, which bringeth forth this delight afore said in ỹ minde

minde of man, like as long continued walking doeth bręede vnto the bodye warmth and heate. For lyke as he that goeth a whyle vp and downe, and walketh forwarde and backwarde, here and there, after some motion of his body, at the last fęeleth heate: euen so after that a man hath long vsed and acquaynted him selfe with prayer, there groweth in his soule a certayne spiritual swętenes and heauenly delectation, wherewith he is beyonde measure rauished and pleased. But albeit that euery man that prayeth, attayneth not in his prayer to this pleasauntnes, yet is he not vtterly frustrate and voyde of other fruites and great commodities whiche he maye gather by prayer. For there be thręe sortes of fruites principally growing vnto man by prayer. And the first is the merite it selfe, whiche God hath promised to graunt for prayers sake. The seconde is the obteyning the thing whiche we earnestly desire in our prayer. And the thirde is the fęeling of that wonderfull swętenes whiche groweth to many

The fruites or commodities of prayer.

1.
2.
3.

men

men in the time of their prayer: whiche three kindes of fruites be ſo diuers, that a man maye eaſyly obteyne the fyrſte of them, wanting both the laſt. For a man may by prayer procure fauour and rewarde at Gods hande, and yet not obteyne the thing whiche in his prayer he requireth. As Saint Paule confeſſeth him ſelfe to haue prayed thrife vnto god to take from him the concupiſcence or rebellion of his fleſhe, wherwith he was greeuouſly afflicted, and obtayned not his requeſt therein: And yet it is certayne and ſure, that he loſte not the rewarde and merite of his good and godlye prayer. Agayne, the two fyrſt maye both be had, and the thirde yet not obteyned, as when we ſee many whiche make humble requeſt to God for the forgeuenes of their ſinnes, obteyne both pardon of god, whiche they require, and beſides that, are aſſured of the rewarde at Gods hande (for that God worke accoꝛding to his promiſe) and for all this, are not alwayes refreſhed with the ſpiritual ioy and pleaſure of their ſoule. 1. Cor. xij.

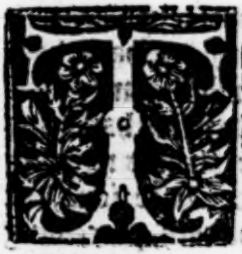
For

For the Publicane of whom Christ maketh mention in the Gospel; when he beeing in the Temple praying, required with al humility forgiuenes of his sinne and wickednes, saying, Deus propitius esto mihi peccatori: God be mercyfull vnto me a sinner: obteyned both as wel the reward of prayer, as also forgiuenes of his sinne. Descendit enim iustificatus in domum suam: He returned (sayth the text) iustified into his owne house. But we reade not in any place, that he in that action receyued any spirituall comfort or consation in his harte or soule. It is therefore apparunte that those fruites be so diuers, that they do not at all times happen altogeather to a man in prayer. But to the ende that it may be more playnly seene and perceyued, of howe greate excellencie any one of these is, we wyl speake somewhat of euery one of them apart, and first what is the reward or merite of prayer.

Luk. xviij.

¶ Of

Of the first fruite of prayer, which is merite and rewarde for the same.



The first fruite of prayer we call merite or rewarde promised by God, both to and for the same. And yet mind I not that euery merit should hereby be vnderstanded, but onely that which che is recompensed by essential rewarde (as they call it) in heauen. For this thing we be right sure of, that no man be he neuer so grieuous a sinner, can vtterly want all maner of merite of his prayer, but he shal be rewarded at Gods hande, either in this present world with some temporal benefites, or at the least, his paynes and punishments shalbe the lesse grieuous in the world to come. But as for the glory of heauen, he shall not (as for that) obtayne the least peece or portion thereof: For that rewarde belongeth to no man, but vnto hym whose prayer springeth from the rote

of

of perfect charitie, that is to say, he that is already by charitie in the grace and fauour of almightye God, when he prayeth. And therefore whosoeuer desireth not to be defrauded of this reward, hath first to care and labour diligently that charitie haue fyrst rote in his harte and soule, whiche beeing so, than is not only his prayer to be iudged meritorious, but also euery other dede he doth, proceeding from the same rote and foundation. And the more it hath of charitie, the greater muste the merite bee. As thus: They are moste worthy reward at the hande of God, that most earnestly pray vnto him for the well doing of their enemies, and enyl wyllers, forasmuche as that kinde of prayer procedeth of so high a degree of Christian charitie. And therefore it shall be expedient for him that loketh for any suche reward of his prayer, to studye specially not to want perfect charity, that is to say, to be when he prayeth in the fauour of God, & state of grace, the whiche thing as great as it is, yet may it be moste easyly of euery

man

man obteyned, be he neuer so greeuous a sinner, as Saint Chrisostome doth at large affirme, writing vpon the Gospel of Saint John, saying thus: That man which desireth to be in that state, let him but repent and returne from sinnes, purpose assuredly with himselfe to leade a newe life in folowing of Jesus Christ, and he is euen then of a sinner made righteous, and hath this charitie so acceptable to God, and consequently (beeing thus iustified) prayeth in the fauour of God and state of grace. Whiche saying of Saint Chrysostome may well be confirmed by the Prophete Ezechiel, who from the mouth of God him selfe promiseth, that in what houre soeuer a sinner shal mourne in hart for his sinne and euyl lyfe, al the same wyl God couer with oblition, and no more remember them to punishe the same. Omnium iniquitatem eius non recordabor: I wyl not (sayth the Prophet in the person of God) remember agayne or take vengeaunce of any of his sinnes. But we may be sure, and must beleue, that sinnes are Ezech. xi.

by none other meanes blotted out and remoued from the sight of God and his remembrance, but by the gyftes of his grace & perfect charitie. By the meanes of the which it is wrought, that the sinner which is returned and fledde from his sinne, that is to say, which is hartyly and truely penitent for his former euyl lyfe, beeing nowe wholly brought to humble obedience vnto the wyll of Christe, is truely iudged to be nowe placed in the state of grace and charitie. Wherfore, forasmuche as repentaunce and amendement of our former euyls, and the mutation and chaunge of our olde life, dependeth partly of our owne wyll, whiche is free to euery man, and partly of the helpe of the grace of God, whiche is denyed to no man, but him that hath not that good wyl and desire aforesayde, to craue the same: it shal be very easy for euery sinner, by those meanes, euen in a moment, to be made of a sinner, iust and righteous, so as he effectually wyl and intende the same, and therewith repose a stedfast hope in the

mercy and goodnes of God. And therefore whosoeuer intending to pray, eftsones renueth and refresheth his fayth in Christe Iesus, and detesting the fylthinesse of his former lyfe, purposeth with him selfe from thencefoorth to abstayne from sinne, and to doo all other thinges according to the wyl and commaundement of God and his Churche, he maye vndoubtedly be accompted in the state of charity and the grace of god, and shal not want the fruite of his prayer, that is to say, suche merite as shal accordingly be recompenced and rewarded in euerlasting felicitie.

Thus muche hitherto haue we sayde of the first fruite of prayer.

Of the obteyning the thing required by prayer, whiche is the seconde fruite thereof.

THE seconde fruite that we haue noted to be in prayer, is the obteyning of the thing whiche we require of God and pray for. And whosoeuer desireth and mindeth to enioy this fruit and commodity of prayer, it shal not be sufficient vnto him only to possesse this gifte of charitie, but he must also leane harde vpon the pyller of singuler humilitie, so as the minde of him that prayeth, may thinke him selfe vnworthy, vpon whom God should bestowe any benefite, or inspire any part of his grace and fauour, and yet neuer cease geuing thankes for the giftes and graces which he hath receyued of God, and if any thing be well done, attribute no prayse or commendation therefore vnto him selfe, but render the whole laude and thankes geuing to God

The speal thinges required for the obteyning of our petitions.

God for al that is well, and the blame and rebuke to him ſelfe for all that is euyl. And we maye truely confeſſe of our ſelues, that of our ſelues we neuer brought forth péece of any good worke or déede: But that euery thing that we haue done, as farre forth as it hath proceéded onely of our ſelues, is more worthy to be called ſinne and vnrighteouſnes, than any acte of vertue and godlynes. For we be alwayes (whenſoeuer we dó wel) placed and ſet in the hande of God, lyke as the hammer is in the hande of the Smith. And lyke as the Smith in his worcking vſeth the hammer as a certayne tole or inſtrument towardes the finiſhing of his worke: euen ſo be we vnto God as inſtrumentes to worke his wyl, whenſoeuer any thing is wel done by vs. For all that euer ſéemeth to be wel done by vs, it is not we of our ſelues that dó the ſame, but God that worketh it in vs. And therfore as the hammer that worketh thereon to frame, hath no cauſe to boaſt and exalt it ſelfe agaynſt the workman that

vſeth it, neyther yet to aſcribe vnto it ſelfe, that by it ſelfe eyther this key, or this nayle was made and faſhioned, but onely by the Smith, vſing the hammer as his toole and inſtrument: Euen ſo is it not lawful for vs to diſpute blaſphemouſly agaynſt God, that of our ſelues or of our owne power we haue done theſe workes, but only by the ayde, helpe, and workmanſhip of his grace, by the which he rayſeth and lifteth vs vp to do any good deede, like as the Smyth doth his hammer to frame his worke, and by vs as his inſtrumentes he bringeth to paſſe this his worke in vs. And therfore we are all bounde to render continuall thankes to almightie God, with al the humilitie and meekeneſſe we be able, that he vouchſafeth to vſe vs as his inſtrumentes in the doing of theſe good workes, whereas if it ſo had pleaſed hys goodneſſe, he mighte and were able to worke the ſame by any other, and peraduenture ſo muche the more fruitfully, as thoſe other might be more apt, ready, and pliant to the execution of the worke

of

of God than we be. But when a man hath with this consideration, in all humilitie deiected him selfe in the sight of the maiestie of God, it is further very necessarie, that he do diligently examine and weigh with him selfe, what it is that he intendeth to require of God in his supplication and prayer, lest perhappes his request be hurteful vnto him selfe, and suche a petition no man ought to loke for at Gods hande. For almightie God, who is of his owne nature most gracious and well wylling to man, can not graunt to his beseecher and suppliaunt his suite and request, where as it is knowen vnto his diuine wysedome, that the same shal be hurtful and perylous vnto him that requireth the same. And we be assured that God knoweth all those thinges aswell that be or maye be hurtfull vnto vs, as those that be or may be expedient and profitable, before we require the same. And therefore we do not at all times obteyne of GOD the thinges whiche we do requyre, specially when he seeth that our re-

requeſtes tende to our owne harme and deſtruction. There is alſo a third thing required to obteine this fruite aforeſaid, that is to ſay, that the thing whiche we require of God, apperteyne vnto our ſelues. For albeit that we be bounde to pray for our neighbours, yet are we not alwayes harde when we praye in that ſort, and ſpecially as touching the fruite whiche we nowe be in hande withal: for that man for whō we require any thing at the hande of God, is perhappes eyther vnworthy to receiue that grace and fauour from God, or els the thing it ſelfe is nothing neceſſary for his owne health and well doing. Neuertheleſſe, yf for thoſe cauſes we do not obteine the thing which we require, yet is not our prayer vtterly vnprofitable, nor wholly voyde of merite, for he can not but deſerue wel that prayeth ſo: Like as the Prophete
Pſal. 34. ſayth, Oratio mea in ſinu meo conuertetur: My prayer (ſayth he) ſhal be turned agayne into mine owne boſome. Which is as muche as if he had ſayde: Verely my prayer which I make for others, if it

profits

profite not them, yet ſhal it not be voyde of al fruite and commoditie, for I know that at the leaſt it ſhal turne vnto mine owne merite, the profit therof ſhal come to me, and my prayer ſhal returne with gayne into mine owne harte & boſome. Therefore if the prayer of any man be grounded vpon the pyller of humilitie, and be exhibited vnto God, for hys owne comfort, relefe & neceſſitie, and require nothing hurtefull or vnconuenient for him ſelfe, let him procéede and go forwarde in the name of our Lorde God, whoſoeuer he be thus affected, nothing miſtruſting but the thing whiche he in this wyſe humbly requireth, he ſhal graciouſly obteyne, nothing miſtruſting, I ſay, becauſe Saint James doth promiſe ſo, ſaying, Poſtulet in fide, nihil hæſitans, & dabitur ei: Let him (ſayth he) require in a fayth not wauering nor doutful, and his requeſt ſhal be graunted vnto hym. And lykewyſe our Sauiour Chriſt in the Goſpel ſayth thus, Quicquid orantis petitis, credite quia accipietis, & fiet vobis: What thing ſoeuer ye require Iacob. ij. Mar. xi.

require by prayer, beléeue that ye ſhall obteyne it, and your deſire ſhal be perfourmed. And nowe this ſhall ſuffice for the declaration of the ſeconde fruite of prayer, and howe, and by what meanes we may obteyne the ſame.

¶ *Of the thirde fruite* of Prayer.

THE thirde fruite of prayer we haue before noted to be a certaine ſpiritual ſwéetneſſe and pleaſure, wherwith our minde is delyghted in the time of our prayer, of the which fruite whoſoeuer deſireth to be partaker, muſt of neceſſitie not onely haue charitie, humilitie, & the other meanes before ſpoken of, but he muſt alſo be marueylous attentiue vnto the prayer he is in hande withall, and not permit his minde and imagi-

imagination to wander abroade to any thing from the matter of his prayer. And albeit this diligent attentiuenesse be necessary and expedient for any man that desireth to enioye the other two fruites of his prayer, that is to say, merite and the obteyning the thing duely and lawfully required: yet may it suffice towardes the getting of eyther of those, if the minde of him that prayeth were earnestly bent in the beginning & fyrst entry into his prayer, so as he dw not afterwarde by his owne wyl and purpose diuert his minde, & suffer it to wander from his prayer. For if in the very first beginning of prayer, a mans mynde be both wylling and studious to attende wholly therevnto, although afterwarde it be by fraylty ledde asyde, or by a certayne oblyuious negligence withdrawen from that former entent and action, it shal not therefore lose the fruites and commodities whereof before we haue spoken, but by the effectuall intent, and assured purposed determination in the beginning of his prayer, he

may

may obteyne both the fruite of merite, and alſo the thing he requireth. The which thing ſhall more playnly appeare by the example whiche we wyll nowe geue forth vnto you. If any man haue a purpoſe to throwe a ſtone to an appoynted place, it is not of neceſſitie that the hande of him that throweth ſhoulde continually folowe with the ſtone: but the power & ſtrength of the firſt throwe whiche in the beginning the hande of him that threwe gaue vnto the ſtone, ſhalbe ſufficient to bring the ſtone to his appoynted place. And veryly it chaunceth not muche vnlike in a man that prayeth, and as it were, throweth his prayers vnto God for him ſelfe. It ſhall ſurely ſuffiſe, if he be attentiue and hartyly bent, euen at the beginning thereof, ſo as he haue then a deſire and purpoſe to continue in the ſame vnto the ende, and he ſhall doubtleſſe, notwithſtanding the wandering awaye of his minde, obteyne both the two fruites aforenamed. But he that deſireth the thirde fruite, that is to ſay, to be refreſhed

ſhed with ſpirituall ſwéetenes, comfort, and conſolation, it ſhal not be ſufficient for him to haue his minde (as hath bin before ſayde) gathered togeather, attent and wholly vacant vnto his prayer in the beginning of the ſame, but he muſt néeds perſeuer and continue in the ſame attentiue diligence from the beginning vnto the ende, neuer diuerting his minde to any other thing, nor ſuffring the ſame to be withdrawen frō the continuall ſeruice whiche he is now in hande withall: but onely dirécte the inwarde ſight and force of his mynde vpon him vnto whom he prayeth. And therefore it ſhal be very conuenient and neceſſarie for him that is deſirous to taſte of this ſpirituall delectation and ſwéetenes of prayer, before he begyn to pray, to clenſe his owne mynde, and driue away all vayne and fruiteleſſe thoughtes, phantaſies, and imaginations, and to pray diligently with the videlat courage of his ſoule, yea, and bend all the force and ſtrength of his mynde, and as muche as he is able, ioyne them toge-

together and fasten them vnto GOD, least that in the continuance of prayer, by the meanes of some light negligence his minde be caried away to the imagination and thinking of other straunge and inconuenient thinges. And therefore for this cause the olde fathers of the Churche of Christe, beeing endewed with great vertue and holynes of lyfe, as ofte as they were mynded to praye, they went forthwith in hande to gather their mindes togeather, and by diuers meanes to styrre vp deuotion in them, sometime praying vppon their knees, sometime beeing alone, lying prostrate vpon the grounde, sometime extending forth their armes in maner of the crosse of Christe. And nowe and then exalting their handes vp towardes the heauens, sitting in the meane time solitary and musing, talking most comfortably with God him selfe, and deuoutly singing some himne or other Psalme. By these meanes and suche other as seemed most commodious vnto them, they vsed marueylous effectually to rayse vp them sel-

ues

nes to contemplation and deuotion, ſo farre forth that they very often tymes taſted of that superexcellent, and in dede vnexpreſſable ſwætnes. And ſurely the only taſt of this kinde of ſwætnes excædeth without compariſon or exception, al the pleaſures of this world. For this one thing comprehendeth preſently in it ſelfe, all kinde of pleaſure and delight, and is the fountayne and ſpring of all maner of goodnes, with the which what thing els ſoeuer thou ſhalte compare, is vtterly nothing, nor can be of any maner effect or moment. And that thing verily is God him ſelfe, who very often doth with a marueylous grace and fauour ſhewe and preſente himſelfe to them that with deuout contemplation ſæke and loke for him. Of the which it followeth, that whenſoeuer that moſte excellent goodnes is once taſted by the inwarde vnderſtanding of our ſoule, a marueylous ſwætnes is forthwith diſpearſed and felte through the whole minde: ſo farre excæding all imagination of man, that no tounge

of

of man is able to expresse the same. But this delectation is neyther of all men, nor at al times attayned and felte, but onely then when it may be most conuenient and profitable. For lyke as the Phisition doth not euer giue medicine as oft as the Pacient desireth, but forbeareth sometime, attending a more opportunitie and better time, when he seeth he shal therewith do more good to the sicke man: Euen so assuredly doth our moste mercyfull Lorde God deferre sometime to graunt this maner of spirituall consolation, vntyll a tyme more apt and conuenient, that is to say, when he knoweth that the gyft of this delectation and comfort shal be more profitable vnto our soules, and procure and bring more and greater fruite and commoditie vnto vs. And therefore many men although they do by continuall prayer call vppon God, to be refreshed wyth this spirituall sweetenesse: yet do they not so spedyly obteyne the same as they do earnestly desire it, because almightie God, like a moste cunning and discrete

Phisi-

Phiſition, taryeth his owne time, more apte, meete, and beneficiall for vs. And that ſometime for theſe cauſes, leaſt yf he ſhould at the firſt giue eare and performe our requeſtes, we might eaſily thereupon eyther growe inſolent and proude, or thinke that of our powers we were able to obteyne this gifte of grace ſo often as we our ſelues were wylling and deſirous. And therefore God moſte wiſely differreth diuers times the ſpeedie expedition and diſpatche of this ſute and requeſt, vntyll he ſee the minde of him that prayeth, deepely and altogether humbled, and ſubſtancially confirmed in a good and vertuous purpoſe, and geuen diligently to apply him ſelfe to holy and godly exerciſes, ſo that beeing thus prepared, he may at the laſt make him partaker of this comfortable conſolation, with a great gayne to him ſelfe, by the longer tarying before he receyue the ſame. And therefore to conclude briefely, whoſoeuer ſeeketh to be delighted with the taſte of this heauenly and ſpiritual comfort and ſweetenes, he muſte

The meanes to obteyne the gyft of delectation in prayer.

1 first and principally with al his power, humiliate & deiect him selfe, and estéeme him self nothing, nor worthy any thing, and vtterly vnworthy vpon whom God shoulde bestowe, not onely this great gyft of his grace, to obteyne the feeling of this delectation, but also any other of his benefits, be it neuer so meane or little, yea, of his owne desert vnworthy the meate he eateth, and the grounde he go-
2 eth vpon. Secondarply, he must kepe his tongue in a good staye, and due obedience, speake little, and delight more in silence, than in muche libertie of speach, except it be eyther when charitie enforceth, or vehement necessitie compelleth, or finally, when some commodity is like therby to grow, eyther to him selfe, or to his neighbour. Thirdly, by all meanes
3 he ought and must labour as muche as in him is possible, to conserue and kéepe freshe in his mynde, the continuall remembraunce of God, set him before his eyes, and thinke that he is alwayes présent, redy to beholde and iudge al that he
4 shal commit or do. Moreouer let him as often

often as he can, renew the memory and remembrance of the incarnation of our Lorde and Sauiour Iesus Christ, together with al the processe and continuall action of his life, and then let him inculcate and imprint fast in his hart, the religious and thankefull memorie of his bitter death and passion, adding to this the consideration and often meditation to the heauenly glory, whiche the Aungels and sanctified soules enioy nowe by the gyfte of God with him. Finally, at all tymes as muche as may be, eschewing al vayne, frinolus, and vnfruitful thoughtes, that cumber and disturbe the minde from the beholding of those heauenly contemplations. But alas, howe wretched be we, that many times preuent these godly meditatiõs, and beforehand occupy our mind (so superexcellent a creature of God) not onely with these vnprofitable, but also extreme pestilent and hateful thoughts, whereas the remẽbraunce of those thinges beforesayde, is far more profitable, an occupation much more delectable, & finally, a studie muche

more excellent then can be otherwise in this life frequented by man. For it sheweth (as it were) vnder a certayne dim or darke cloude, the very brightnes, beautie, & felicitie of heauen, and is as a sparke of the beatitude to come, and finally, an assured pledge and token of the life euerlasting. And if there be any man that worthily may be called happy and blessed in this mortal lyfe, it is verily onely he that earnestly occupyeth him selfe in the remembraunce of the thinges aforesayde, and hath geuen him selfe holly ouer to prayer, deuotion, and contemplation. But forasmuche as we haue nowe sufficiently spoken of these three fruites and commodities growing to man by prayer, let vs nowe turne our speache somwhat to the declaration of the maner of prayer, and howe and in what sorte it ought to be vsed.

¶ The

¶ The thirde part of this Booke, intreating of the maner of praying.

AND to the intent we may the more easyly understande, what is ỹ most conuenient manner of prayer, it shal be very necessary to know perfectly and marke diligently these three thinges whereof we haue nowe to speake. The maner of praying consisteth cheefly in three thinges.

The first whereof is this, to what thing we ought cheefely to attende in the time of our prayer, whether to the wordes we speake, to the sence of the wordes spoken, or rather to the person of him, vnto whom we do speake and direct our prayer. The nexte is, of what shortnes or length our prayer ought to be. The thirde and laste, whether it be more profitable to pray onely with the mynde, or to vtter with the tongue, the prayer conceyued in the mynde. Surely if these three thinges be well knowen, 1 2 3

tried and examined by vs, it shalbe very manyfest and easie to iudge and perceyue, what kinde of prayer ought to be estéemed most excellent and most fruitfull. And therefore we wyll with diligence searche out somthing for the explanation of euery of these three thinges, that is to say, whervnto we ought to intende our mindes in prayer, howe long or short our prayer ought to be, and howe we ought to pronounce and vtter the same.

¶ *To what thing we ought* cheefly to bende our minde in the time of prayer.

FIrst let vs discusse this, whether the force of our mindes be to be directed to the wordes, the sence of the wordes, or to him we vtter the wordes vnto. And to the first we saye, that yf a man were of such vnperitie and rednes that he

he could attende all those thinges toge-
ther in his prayer, so as the hēde taking
eyther to the wordes, or the meaning of
the wordes, shoulde nothing slacke his
diligent and attentiue mind to God him
selfe, that maner of prayer were doubt-
lesse most excellent and beneficiall. But
because it can scarcely be possible that a
man in earnestly hēding and atten-
ding one of these, shall not negligently
omit and forget the other, let vs there-
fore perticulerly enquire of euery one,
which is the better, more necessary, and
more fruitefull. And amongest these,
there is no man that diligently conside-
reth the thing, that can or nede to doubt
but that the attention which is directed
vnto God him selfe, is the cheefe and
most meritorious, so that all other thin-
ges be agreeing vnto the same, that is,
if that same prayer directed vnto God be
in no wise more negligent than ỹ other,
which is intended eyther to the wordes
or meaning. And we mind that this vn-
derstāding be accepted & taken not only
in such prayers as a man appoynteth to

him selfe, of his owne wyll and choyse, but likewise in al other, wherevnto we be bounde by the ordinaunce of the Church. And surely many there be of so weake and scrupulous myndes, that being in feare to escape or misse one word or sillable in saying their appoynted seruice and prayers, bende al the power of their mynde to expresse the wordes truely, playnely, and distinctly. But those men (as I thinke, neuer or very rarely tast of the swetenes of deuotion and prayer, for the whiche cause chefly our forefathers of the Churche did appoint those canonical prayers, as we vse to call them. For those olde and holy men specially had respect vnto this: And this was their most earnest purpose and payneful studie, by the saying of these vertuous, godly, and deuout prayers, to styre vp the mindes of the Priestes, who should be the meanes betwene god and the people, to the contemplation of God him selfe, and so to the true loue of him. And therefore if a man be so attentiue and diligent in vttering the words

of

of prayer, that he neyther regarde nor obserue the scope and ende whiche the holy Fathers, when they ordeyned those prayers, iudged and determined chiefly to be considered, I may in no wise alow or commende this maner of prayer, eyther as chefe, or more fruiteful then the others. And yet would I not that others, whiche contrarywyse so rashely runne ouer the prayers appoynted, that scarsly they can vnderstande them selues for haste, neyther regarding the supereycellencie of him, to whom they pray, neyther yet imagining of any further sence and meaning of the wordes they speake, I woulde not (I say) that those shoulde make my speache before, any maner of colour of defence for their errours and abuses. For I speake it not with that mind to mislike or condemne them, that regarde the wordes they speake, who I knowe do obserue and fulfyll the lawe and order: but to this ende, to persuade vnto those a more excellent maner of prayer, and therewith more fruitful. It may be also, that those which are chefly atten-

attentiue to the sence and meaning of their prayer, do sometimes receiue therby consolation of that spiritual pleasure and sweetenes. But (as I thinke) they tast not the very true and sincere delectation, whiche groweth by a certayne vnion and perfect agreement, by the coniunction and ioyning togeather of our soules with almightie God. And yet it may be, that we may be brought vnto this vnion by some comfortable text or exposition of the scriptures, & at the last into the very bowels and secrets of that perfect and true delight. But that pleasure whiche groweth onely of the scriptures, is much more faynt, and nothing so abundaunt or full, as that whiche floweth directly from the spring of the godhead it selfe. For the Scripture albeit it dyd proceede from God, yet is it a creature. And what creature soeuer possesseth our minds, be it neuer so excellēt, so as it be not God him selfe, that same standeth betweene god and vs, insomuch that it is an impediment vnto our mindes, that we be not ioyned euen face to face,

face, and perfectly coupled with god him selfe. And by that meane ministeth the pure and sincere delectation, whiche is drawen from the foūtaine it selfe. Therfore albeit those that apply their myndes to the sence of their prayers, do sometime feele a certayne spirituall comforte, yet be they farre from that absolute sweetenes, of the whiche I haue spoken before, whereof no man can taste but he that thinketh in his prayer of God onely, and hath no kinde of abiect betweene God and his soule, but is euen coupled, fastened, and united with God him selfe. The whiche is obteyned, when a man (leauing and forsaking the imagination of euery other thing, ouerpassing all representations and false shewes of worldly creatures) occupieth his mynde with none other thing, then with the consideration and contemplation of God him selfe, and then is he nereste and moste surelyest ioyned vnto God, vnto whom when he shall feele his harte sweetely to be fastened and firmely to cleaue, then groweth the sensible

How the sweetenes in prayer is obteyned.

sensible tast and feling of that supreme delectation and comfort, which he onely knoweth whom God hath graunted to taste the same. But marke and remember this, that the imagination whiche our minde frameth to it selfe of GOD, must neither be subiect to colour, light, figure, or briefly any worldly or corporal shape, for all those thinges beeing creatures, are playnely besides God. And we seeke to ioyne our selues with God and nothing els besides him. And therefore if a man wyl rightly thinke of God him selfe, let his minde ouerrunne all worldly creatures, and conceyue him only alone whych is highest, best, most excellent, most mighty, and him that without exception doth unspeakeably excede all other thinges. If thou canst this do, then thinke the same to be present with thee, and yet without imagination eyther of colour, light shape, or fourme whatsoeuer, and then hast thou rightly thought of God. In whiche worke and busynes, if thou be paynefull, and wyll diligently exercise thy selfe, than shalt

thou

thou surely at the last attaine to the sensible taste and feeling of that vnspeakable pleasure, and so shalt thou at once obtayne al the three fruites of thy prayer. But yet if this maner and forme of doing, seeme at the beginning harde and vneasie to any man, let him first exercise himselfe in thinking and contemplation of Iesus Christ, who besides his humanitie is also very God. Let him lifte vp the strength of his minde towards him, as beeing very God, remembring his incarnation, his bitter paynes and cruel death, and therwith the glory whiche he nowe ineffably enioyeth in heauen, sitting on the right hande of the Maiestie of his father. He that wyl diligently apply his minde to this, or any other more apte or fruitful meditation of God, shal at the last fal from the corporall imagination of Christ in his humaine nature, and shal ascende and aspire to the spirituall contemplation of his godhead, as hath ben beforesayde. And this truely is the very next way for any man to attayne to the fruition of the perfect and

pure

pure delectation and absolute consolation in God. But if we do not at the first get the taste of this swetenes, god withdrawing the same, and keping it from vs, eyther for that he seeth that it at that time shal little profite vs, eyther for that our prayer is but colde and vnfruiteful, and we in consideration of the dignitie and great worthynes of the thing not sufficiently attentiue and diligent: yet be we sure that we can not lose the first fruite, which is the merite folowing our good minde and fact of prayer. The best then and most pure and perfect maner of prayer, shal be for any man, after that he hath gathered his minde together, & directed the force of his soule vpõ god him selfe, as beeing verely present, to offer to him with al the affection possible of his hart, those prayers which he mindeth to say, whether he vnderstand them, or not, and to insinuate and fasten him selfe as firmely as he can vnto him. And if he go forward and continue in this trade, that is to say, if beeing once fixed on God, he wander not astray any other wher from

God,

God, he shal profite muche more in the loue of God, whiche is the true ende of prayer, then if he were neuer so attent eyther to the wordes or sence of his wordes without the other. For this firing of the minde vppon God, hath many times a companion and folower, such an eleuation of the hart, that the minde verye oftentimes forgetting all earthlye thinges, knoweth not where he is, euen as though it were strayed from it selfe, yea, and sometimes there foloweth such a motion of the spirit, that before a man be ware he cryeth out, and doth diuers thinges that afterwardes he neyther knoweth nor doth remember, because the spirite & power of God doth so mightyly worke in him, that he hath no power to withdraw himself from such motions as the same inspireth vnto hym. And as very many of the olde holy Fathers, whiche were right cunning and perfect in this art, do testify that there is felt many times such swetenes & delectation in prayer, that it ouerfloweth the soule, and maketh the flesh of our bodies

partaker

partaker of the ſame loye and delight, and is nowe made in ſuch eſtate, that it feeleth a maruelous delectation, & ſuche as it neuer taſted before, which thing is affirmed by the Prophet Dauid, ſaying,

Pſal. 83. Cor meum & caro mea, exultauerunt in deum viuum, My harte and my fleſhe haue reioyced together in God, the auc-thour and geuer of lyfe. As though he would haue ſayde, My ſoule by the good-nes of the ſpirite of God, hath conceyued in it ſelfe ſo merueilous a delight in god, that by the great delectatiõ therof, euen my fleſhe is alſo replenithed & watered ouer and ouer, wherein it hath ſo reioy-ced that it could not refrayne or ſtay it ſelfe from exprelling and ſhewing forth the pleaſure which it had receyued. And ſurely this delectation is a very ſparkle or glimering reſemblaunce of the euer-laſting life, which all good men ſhal haue after the generall reſurrection of their bodies. For then ſhall the glory of the ſoule ſo farre excæde and abounde, that it ſhall runne ouer into the bodies, and then ſhall both aſwell body as ſoule be fulfilled

fulfilled and satisfied with the plentyful aboundaunce of that vnspeakable pleasure. And therefore as touching thys first question, it maye appeare by that which hath bin sayde, that the cheefe and speciall thing to be regarded in prayer, is, to haue our mindes so fixed on God, vnto whom we make our prayers, as though we estæmed him euen now to present with vs, and so embrace the continuall remembraunce of hym, keeping him before the eyes of our hartes without any manner declining from them. And albeit this shal seeme in the first beginning of this exercise harde and paynfull, yet shall it by vse and practise of time proue more pleasaunt and delightful, specially to those soules, whiche be any thing inspired with the swetenesse and good sauour of Iesus Christe. And nowe let vs reaiue to the intreating of the seconde question.

Of what length our prayer ought to be.

NOwe haue we to consider in this seconde place, of what length and continuaunce our prayer ought to be. For it may be eyther shorter or longer, but what shortnes or length is moste expedient, that seemeth to appertayne, and to be considered in the maanner of prayer. And therefore it may be sayde, that albeit our Sauiour Christe dyd geue the precepte to pray continually, yet ought not that so to be vnderstanded, that we be bounde alwayes actuallye to pray, beeing beyonde the possibilitie and the power of man. For the fraylte of mans nature doth not permit any man to be continually attentiue to prayer, eyther in worde, eyther in hart, but he is inforced to alienate his minde otherwyse. And yet dyd Christe truely admonishe vs howe great

great necessitie foloweth vs to praye (if we were able, cõtinually) forasmuch as no moomente of time passeth, in the whiche we neede not of the ayde and helpe of God, and that assistaunce from God ought we incessauntly to craue of him, and bygge it we must, albeit our weake nature can not continually persewer in that action of prayer. And therfore the iudgement of the moste graue and learned writers, is, that our prayer shoulde so long be continued, as it shoulde be auayleable to the ende, for the whiche prayer was first ordeyned. For like as no medicine is ministred to the sicke man, in any greater quantity then is thought sufficient for the ease and recouery of the pacient, which is the ende of phisicke: euen so ought our prayer to be of so great length as may suffise for the obteyning the nexte ende thereof. And the cheefe and nexte ende of our prayer, for whiche it was ordeyned, is the feruencie of christian charitie, which is vndoubtedly the health of our soules. For those that want charitie, and be neither

hotte nor colde, God despiseth, before whom, in the Apocalippes, he preferreth those that be vtterly starke cold, saying: Vtinam calidus esses aut frigidus, sed quia tepidus es, incipiam te euomere: I woulde thou haddest bene eyther hot or colde, but for that thou art neyther of both, I wyll begin (sayth God) to reiect thee and cast thee forth from the companie and felowship of good men. Lo then howe the minde of God abhorreth those persons that be newters, and be neyther hotte nor colde. We must therefore endeuour our selues by all meanes to be feruent in charitie, for the kindling of the whiche in vs, no doubt prayer is the most necessarie thing. The whiche charitie beeing once gotten, we be encouraged chearefully to take in hande all dowinges, which we trust shall please God, and for the doing whereof we shall by the goodnes and promise of God be rewarded with euerlasting ioy and felicitie. And therefore our special endeuour in the tyme of our prayer, ought to be, that the feruent heate of charitie might

be

be kindled in our hartes, and in suche sort shal it be conuenient to moderate the length of our prayer, so as that ende may both be acquired and preserued in vs. And therfore when we in our prayer do perceyue this feruentnes of mynde once kindled in vs, by the weaknes and wearines of our bodies to waxe cold and faynt, then is it tyme to reasle frō prayer, and occupie our selues about some other vertuous exercise. For if we should so long continue, that the feruentnes of deuotion should be vtterly extinguished in vs, we shoulde not onely not obteyne the end which is sought for by our prayer, but we should also geue an small occasion to procure the contrary. For so sone as by ouerlong continuing in that dulnesse of prayer, the feruentnes therof & deuotion is once colde in our myndes, we do forthwith lose the inwarde consolation of our mindes, whiche that feruentnes of deuotion, not beeing vtterlye extinguished, wrought and preserued in vs, whereby it doth many times folowe that we wander abrode, seeking some

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sensible delectation and comfort of eternal thinges, which most commonly inducth a pernicious dissolution of the minde, and by degrees draweth it vnto such other cuyls as be not conuenient, whiche woulde neuer haue chaunced, if we had ceased our prayer before the fervencie of deuotion had vtterly bene extinguished. And therefore Saint Augustine doth much prayse certaine Monks in Egypt, which vsed very short & therwith very deuout & godly prayers. The religious people in Egypt (sayth Saint Augustine) be vsed to vse very often prayers, but those very short and pithy, and (as it were) sweetely throwen from their hartes into the bosome of almighty God. And it appeareth that this was the cause why they vsed so oft̃ prayers, because they woulde oftentimes renue and kindle agayne the fyre of deuotion in their hartes. But the cause why they vsed short prayers was only this, lest by length of prayer and tediousnes therein, feruent deuotion before cõceiued might be dulled, coled, & finally extinguished.

And

And therfore a man in prayer must specially labour and take heede, that when God hath once kindled that feruent deuotion in his hart, he by negligence suffer not the same vtterly go out and dye. But so long as the same may eyther be increased or continued, we ought not to leaue of prayer, except eyther the great weerysomnes of our bodies, or some other lyke necessitie inforce vs. Wherefore both the shortnes & length of praier, is to be ruled & measured, to and for this ende aforesayde. For like as the phisition, regarding the ende of his cure, whiche is the recouery and health of his pacient, doth temper his medicine, and ministreth it to the sicke, not in such abundaunce as he might do, but as by discretion he ought to do, hauing regarde both to the getting and continuing the health to his pacient: euen so a man in prayer must not labour to pray as much and as long as he can speake, but to continue the length of his prayer as much as shal be necessary & expedient eyther for to increase or continue his earnest & feruent

deuotion. And therefore, when in his prayer he perceyueth hym selfe by the vnion whiche he fyndeth betweene God and his soule, to be swetely affected and pleasauntly kindled, let hym then procede and go forwarde with wyfull sighinges and comfortable teares, finishing the rest of his prayer, as the holy spirite of God shal, during his prayer, suggest matter into his harte. For as long as this heate of deuotion once conceyued, endureth, I would not aduise any man to leaue of prayer, except there be some other impediment whiche maye be as muche or more to the honour of God, or to him selfe that prayeth more necessary, or finally more profitable to his neighbour. But assone as he perceyueth this feruent deuotion by the fraylte & weakenesse of his body to decay, then let him content and satisfie him selfe with the gaine and profite he hath already gotten, and leauing prayer, turne him selfe to some other good worke or occupation, meete and agreable for his vocation, vntyl he finde a newe disposition rayled

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in him selfe to pray, or some other newe opportunitie to followe the same. And as often as he feeleth him selfe stirred with any newe affection to pray, let hym in no wyse lose that motion, forasmuch as he then may, by some dart of prayer, be it neuer so short, penetrate the mercy of almightie God. For inasmuche as that affectiō (as we ought of reason to think) is moued by the holy spirite of God, thou mayst not refuse to accept, imbrace, and followe the same, except thou wylt shewe thy selfe vnkinde and vnthankful to the spirite of grace. And therfore (necessitie excepted) al other busines set aside, that motion must earnestly be followed, and that scholemaster of our soule diligently serued, and the affection in no wyse to be permitted to decay or perishe. But some man wyll saye, howe is it possible that any man which is conuersaunt amongst the affayres and busines of this worlde, shoulde in this sorte attende and applye him selfe to prayer? He may, saith Saint Chrisostome, and that very easelye, although he were tied in the market place

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of all worldly busines, and stode in the iudicial place of worldly iudgementes. For it is not the voyce (sayth Chrysostome) whiche is alwayes required, but the elevation of the hart and contemplation of the minde, neyther is the extention of the handes so much to be desired as the intention of the minde. If thou haue thy mynde onely feruently bent, thou hast then attained to the perfection of prayer. Hitherto Chrisostome. Thou mayst therfore pray in any place whersoeuer thou be, yea albeit thou happen to be in company, thou mayest for some little time withdraw thy selfe frō them. and as it were by stealth offer vp vnto God some short prayer, as the Scripture sayth, Aquæ furtiuæ sunt dulciores: Waters priuily stolen be alwayes the sweetest. And in very deede, those prayers whiche be swiftly and secretely throwen vp into the sight of God, do replenishe our myndes with muche more abundant grace, & pearseth our harts with a more feruent loue & desire towardes him, and (as good mens experience teacheth) far

Prou. 9.

more

more acceptable and pleasaunt vnto the most louing spouse of the soule of man Jesus Christe, than any other kinde or maner of prayer can be. And if thou can by no meanes sequester thy selfe from them in whose company or seruice thou art, yet mayst thou at the least, euen remayning with them, lifte vp thy mynde to God, whose present assuraunce thou shalt not néede to doubt, and euen then, with a fewe wordes conceyued onely in minde, to knocke and cal vpon his mercy, saying with the Prophete, Intende in adiutorium, domine deus salutis meæ: Psal.37. Harken vnto me, and spéedily helpe me, O thou God of my health and saluation. Or els thus, Deus in adiutorium meum intende: Psal.96. O God applye thy wyll to succour me. Which wordes Cassianus noteth to be very effectuall. And if thou do hartily thinke these fewe wordes, thy prayer is doubtlesse euen then accepted. And such kinde of prayer maist thou vse & frequent whersoeuer thou be, as Chrisostome saith, whersoeuer thou remayne thou mayst there erect vnto thy selfe an

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aulter and place of prayer, the place nothing hindereth, for a man that sitteth worcking in his shoppe maye thus dedicate his soule by prayer vnto almightie God, thus a seruaunt being occupied in the seruice of his master may neuertheselle pray, and this may any man do in the market place, this may he do in prison, yea and in the myddle of neuer so great a multitude, as Saint Paul prayed in prison, Esayas in the myre or durt, Ezechias turning him selfe in his bedde towardes the wal, Daniel in the denne of the Lyons, Jonas in the bellye of the Whale, the theefe on the crosse, and yet were they harde in fewe wordes, of God. This is the summe of Chrysostomes mynde, written by him in diuers places of his workes. And therefore whosoeuer shal in this wise from time to time exercise him selfe sometime praying, sometime otherwise, doing well, alwayes trauayling eyther to obteyne, increase, or nourishe the feruencie of charitie, neuer suffring (as farre forth as he is able) the same heate to waxe colde, or be extingui-

Act. xvi.
Jere. 38.
Esay. 38.
Da. 9. & 14
Jonas. 2.
Luk. 23.

tinguished by his fault, neither yet permitting suche good affections and godly motions, as the spirite of God shall suggest and inspire into his harte, vtterly to perishe, without any fruite of receyuing and folowing them, that man doubtlesse shal at the laste attayne vnto a marueilous tranquility and quietnes, and a moste pleasaunt and quiet rest of his soule, & therwith vnto an vnspeakable ioy of his minde in the spirite of almightie God, which ioy (no doubt) doth without all comparison excell all the mirth, pleasures, pastimes, delightes, or ioyes of this worlde, which world is in deede no better then a very false sciophant, deceytful ingler, and desuding enchaunter of our soules. But nowe let vs go in hande with the thirde question.

VVhether

Whether the prayer of the hart onely be more fruiteful than that wherein the mouth and hart allo is occupied.

It resteth nowe to be discussed, whether that prayer be more beneficiall to man, whiche hee maketh with his hart onely, or that which is both utted from his hart, and with his mouth. And heere I make this protestation, that I do none wise purpose or intende any thinge to say in the dispraise or otherwise, to the derogation of open prayer by wordes, which is rather admitted by custome and the use therof, or appoynted by the ordinance of the Church, or enioyned vnto any man by penance, or by any meanes vowed, or in hart by promise taken in hand, whereby any man standeth bounde to resite and say his prayers. But yet I do thinke that a man which is free from any suche bonde,

bonde, and enioyeth full and perfecte libertie in Christe, and is studious of the most pure & healthfull maner of prayer, shal be oftentimes more hindered by the continual vse of praying in words, than by the exercise of his hart alone, in making of his prayer vnto God. For as Saint Augustine in an Epistle vnto Proba wryteth of the fruite of prayer: This worke is many times more perfectly wrought by the sighing of the hart than by pronouncing of the mouth, more effectually done by the inwarde working than by outwarde speaking. But if the worke of prayer be more perfectly perfourmed by the sighing of the harte than with the vtteraunce of the mouth, then must it needes folowe, that the prayers of the hart, from the whiche those sighinges breake forth, be more profitable than the praying with the mouth, whereby words only be vttered. And that may of right be iudged, for as S. Cyprian doth witnesse, God geueth eare, not to the voyce of mans mouth, but to the cry of his hart, neither is he to

Aug. Epist. i.xij. Cap.x.

Ciprianus de oratione dominica. Ser. 6.

be

be moued with wordes, which seeth all thoughtes. And therefore any simple poore man, which beeing with great humilitie prostrate to the grounde, lying like a most vyle abiect, confessing him selfe a sinner, opening his owne miseries, and shewing forth the most secrete greefes of his hart before the sight of god vttering no wordes at al, but onely powring forth aboundaunce of teares and sighes of his harte, that man (no doubt) shall most speedyly obteyne hys request of God: whiche thing dyd moste manyfestly appeare in Anna the mother of Samuell. For this Anna (as it is written in the first boke of the Kings) dyd moste earnestlye require of GOD, beeing barreyne, to haue a chylde, for the obteyning whereof she dyd frequent the Temple, and there by dayly prayer she continually craued the goodnesse of God, that in her request he would be gracious vnto her: And yet did she not frame her prayer in wordes, but onely in her harte. For the Scripture testifieth, that she spake to God with her hart, and

i. Reg. i.

and that no woꝛde was harde that came from her, onely her lippes moued. To conclude, by this her pꝛayer (of harte I ſay, without ſpeache outwardly pꝛonounced) ſhe obteyned the thing ſhe requiꝛed of God, and had a ſonne, whiche ſhe ſo greatly deſiꝛed, and had begged of GOD with many ſighes and aboundaunce of weeping teares, and yet no woꝛdes by her mouth vttered. Saint Hierome agreeth with this, expounding this place of Saint Matthewe, Tu cum oraueris, intra in cubiculum tuum, & clauſo oſtio ora patrem tuum: When thou doeſt pꝛay, enter into thy chamber, and ſhutting faſte thy doꝛe, pꝛay vnto thy heauenly father. It ſeemeth vnto me (ſayth S. Hierome) that this is rather a pꝛecept, that we keeping ſecretly in the thought of our harts, and hauing our voyce ſuppꝛeſſed with ſilence, ſhould ſo make our pꝛayers vnto God, which we alſo reade in the booke of the Kinges, that Anna did, where it is wꝛitten that her lippes only moued, but no voyce was harde. This much Saint Matth. vj.

Hierome writeth. And surely this maner of prayer dothe vehemently moue the eares of the mercy of GOD, and doth mightyly bowe them spedyly to heare vs: Yea, and as Saint Paule witnesseth, the holy spirite of God is the guide & the directour of this maner of prayer, saying, Quid oremus sicut oportet, nescimus: sed ipse spiritus postulat pro nobis gemitibus inenarrabilibus: What wee shoulde praye as we ought to pray, we knowe not: but the spirite him selfe maketh request for vs, with vnspeakeable mourninges and sighinges. The meaning whereof is, that we do not sufficiently know in what maner we ought to demaunde any thing of God, but the verye spirite of God inwardly rayling vp our hartes, maketh vs with vnspeakeable mone and intercession to require of God that thing whiche is moste profitable for vs. And yet do I not denie, but that any deuoute man may right well begin his prayer as he lyst, with wordes pronounced by his mouth, but so soone as he shall perceyue his hart to be any

thing

thing kindled and inspired with a swete delectation comming from the spirite of God, then shall it be moste commodious to him, leauing his prayer in wordes, to folowe and geue hede to the leading of the spirite of God, and with silence to yelde him selfe wholly to his direction and order. For, as I haue said a little before, thende which we ought to appoynt vpon in prayer, is specially the feruentnes of charitie, by the whiche at the laste our mindes be kindled, when with moste diligent prayer, our hartes be strongly raysed, and our mindes be highly lyfted vp vnto the beholding of God. And therfore whensoeuer we may perceyue our selues to haue atteyned vnto this ende, then must we apply al our endeuour and diligence, that as muche as may be the same be continued in vs, whiche thing shal doubtlesse muche better procede, by the guiding & operatiō of the holy spirit, than by any wordes vttered by our neuer so great industry & diligence. And therefore we must now with al our power folowe the motion & driuing of the spirite

of God, whither soeuer it wyl leade vs, and so neede not to vtter any mo wordes.

A similitude aptly applyed.

In like maner as if a man, when after much trauayle he hath passed the Seas, and hath obtayned harborowe and his desired Hauen, leauing hys shyppe which brought him to the hauen, intendeth nowe to the ende & purpose for the which he arriued, and thinketh nowe no more of his ship: Euen so verely, he that by the vse of pronounced prayer, as by a meane, is caried into the inwarde consolation of the minde, and commeth to the spiritual feruencie in God, ought nowe to haue his principal care and study bent on this, that this heate in no wyse waxe colde, and leauing nowe the prayer of the mouth, he must folowe the spirite of God, the minister of his feruent deuotion, whyther soeuer it doth dryue him. And nowe let him not vse any more hys owne wordes, but onely those which be suggested inwardly in the harte by that holy spirite of God, and let him aske that of God with vehement and feruent deuotion of mynde, without any pronunciation

ciation or ſounde of wordes. But to the ende thou mayeſt more playnely and aſſuredly perceyue, that this maner of prayer whiche is done by the ſpirite and minde, is much more excellent than that which is vttered in wordes, heare what our Sauiour Chriſt ſayth in the Goſpel: Spiritus eſt deus, & qui adorant eum, in ſpiritu & veritate oportet adorare: God is a ſpirit, and they that adore him, muſt adore him in ſpirite and trueth. Lo, as God is a moſt ſpirituall thing, euen ſo requireth he a moſte ſpiritual ſacrifice. And therfore that prayer is more gratefull vnto him which is offred by the ſpirite and the minde, than the onely groſſe vttraunce of the voyce, whiche can not be framed without the bodyly breath. And let not this moue thee, that Adorare is named in that place, and not Orare, for the one of them ſhal neuer wel be without the other, but when God is prayed vnto, then is he alſo adored, and when he is adored, he is alſo prayed vnto. And therfore God wil be intreated with ſpirite and minde of the moſte choſen and

Iohn. iiij.

excellent mindes, whiche be most spiri-
tual, and desireth, such as in his Gospell
he noteth, to honour and adore him in
spirite and trueth. Wherfore I nothing
doubt, but many godly and spirituall
men (whiche haue diligently exercised
them selues in prayer, and haue accusto-
med dayly to eleuate their hartes vnto
GOD, and haue at some tymes tasted
and conceiued the swetenes of that fer-
uent affection) haue much more profited
by that prayer of their hart, than if they
had sayd an endelesse number of prayers
and Psalmes with their mouth, whiche
thing some do, ouercharging their
mindes, yea, and rather excluding them
selues from the very ende of prayer, for
that in that case they can neuer be able
to tast the spiritual swetenes of perfect
prayer. And out of doubt, that desire and
trauayle to perfourme the saying of so
great a number of Psalmes, doth many
times hinder and turne away the gra-
cious visitation of God from the hartes
of them that labour in them, whiche
otherwise he would willingly and rea-

lye exhibite vnto them. For lyke as the ſonne doth euery way diſperſe & ſpreade abrode the beames of his light: euen ſo is God ready on euery ſide, to powre forth vpon vs the ſwetenes of his grace and goodnes, except by ſuche lettes and hinderances, all acceſſe and entry to our mindes be ſtopped, and the way hidden from vs, as it were with a thick & darke miſte. For he that deſireth to be partaker of that ſwætenes, maye in no wyſe geue hæde to any other thing whatſoeuer it be, but attende only and wholly to God him ſelfe, yea, and that with all his harte. But thoſe other attende neuer a whit to God, but onely regarde howe to vtter out thoſe number of wordes, which they mind to say: Neither do they cõſider the preſent maieſtie of god, but only how they may moſt ſpædily runne ouer their number of pſalmes, with the care wherof they do ſo occupie and ouercome their mindes, that no drop of heauenly ſwætnes can in any wiſe enter into thē. And yet do they think & perſuade themſelues that by ſo doing they ſhal ſpecially pleaſe

A ſimilitude declaring the redy aſſiſtance of God in prayer.

God, and can not be quiet or satisfied in conscience, vntyl they haue by one way or other, ouerrunne & finished that huge number of Psalmes. Yea, and if they chaūce by forgetfulnes to pretermit any part vnsayd of that (I meane not which the Churche appoynteth to be sayd, but) whiche they of their owne wyl haue taken in hand to say, they finde their conscience greuously therewith offended, wherwith they be miserably tormented, and their hartes torne and rent. Those men truly do not sufficiently waigh the saying of S. Hierome, which is this, that the saying or singing of fiue Psalmes with a pure and sincere harte and spiritual ioy and gladnes, is more worth then the whole Psalter, ouerrunne with an vnquiet & troubled minde. And yet is it more meruaile that they heare not, or at the least marke not Christ himself in the Gospel, geuing admonition and instructing such as pray, not to bende their labour to speake much, saying in this wise,

Math. vj. Orantis, nolite multum loqui: When ye pray, do ye not speake much. Not to this ende,

ende, that by those wordes it were to be vnderstanded or thought that Christ misliked a long continued prayer, whereas we reade that he himselfe continued very long in prayer: But he would not in any wise that we shoulde put a vayne trust in a number of wordes, by one way or other made vp & multiplied, specially when they vtterly wanted all deuoute affection of the mind, and that we should not hope that he would soner be moued with a multitude of wordes, than with a well affected mynde. For God is muche more inclined to heare our petitions by the onely feruent affection of the harte, than by neuer so great a number of wordes pronounced without suche affection. For the whiche cause Saint Augustine sayth thus: It is one thing to speake much, and farre another to be much and wel affected. It is one thing (sayth he) to continue speach long, and much another to continue deuotion long. That man speaketh much to God, that thinketh his mercy is to be wonne with a number of wordes onely. But truely he vseth not

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to be moued with ỹ multitude of speach, but with the quantitie and aboundance of deuotion and godly affection. And the bare sounde of wordes pronounced by the lippes only, maketh a very dul sounde in his eares. But the feruent & vehement affection of the minde doth quickly and spædyly penetrate thē, and that because God is muche more delyghted with our godly affectiō, then with our bare prayer, & specially when that affection being accompanied with feruent sighes & aboundant teares, do pearce the heauens. Truly that maner of prayer, if God were (in a maner) vnerorable, woulde ouercome him to mercy, & be he neuer so omnipotent, wyl binde him to graunt our lawful desires. And surely the same prayer is muche rather framed and perfected in the spirite & minde of man, and so sooner presented vnto God, than by any wordes that mans mouth is able to performe or expresse. For the spirit and soule of man beeing once quickned and kindled with the feruent fyre of deuotion, much sooner dispat-

dispatcheth his intent and purpose, than any motion of the lippes, or framed prayer of the mouth were able to dw, which thing (if none other) maketh apparaunt the thing wherof we haue so long intreated, that is to say, the prayer of the mind and soule only, to be more excellent and better, than the prayer of the mouth: forasmuch as both the motion of the lippes is very slow, and the corporal weight of the tongue, vttring forth his words, not so apt to folowe the quicknes of the spirite, and also muche hinderaunce folowethby opening and shuttyng the mouth, so that they can not in any wyse, serue the swift motion of the soule and minde, and specially at suche tyme as the minde is inflamed, and deuotion feruently kindled therein. For in that case it is caried with suche a swiftnes, that the fleshlynes of the mouth, tongue, and lyppes, can in no wyse followe it: And if they shoulde, yet dw they bring no benefite to the spirite, but onely a weight and heauy burthen. And therefore I woulde admonishe all suche as

delight

delight in prayer, and willingly study to serue God therewith, and specially suche as haue leysure to attende the same, and to bestowe very much of their time therin, that they do not vnprofitably ouerlode themselues with to many wordes in prayer, but that they would from henceforth dayly bestowe so muche tyme in kyndling their mindes, in casting their thoughtes and affections vpon God, and in the receyuing his mercyfull visitation into the bowels of their hartes, as they haue spent lesse fruitefully heretofore, in ouerrunning a multitude of wordes with smal consideration or weighing of them, to the ende that by this meane they may at the last obteyne and come vnto the tast and feling of that vnspeakable swætnes, which thing surely they shall attayne vnto, if they first dow worthyly prepare them selues in such sort as we haue shewed before, & then dow humbly offer their mindes in the sighte of God, and finally apply their careful studie and intent, to perfourme and finishe their prayer, with al attention and diligence

gence of their hartes. And yet they ſhall do wel to begin with vocal prayer, and ſpecially with ſuche, whereby they haue founde them ſelues before moſte eaſily kindled and inflamed to deuotion, and the other contemplation of their ſoules. But when after their beginning a whyle, they ſhall perceyue them ſelues inflamed and ſweetely affected with the inſpiration and mercyfull viſitation of the ſpirite of God, and pleaſauntly drawen towardes his heauenly preſence, than leauing to vtter or pronounce their prayer, let them folowe the leading of the holy ſpirite of God in them, and then let them labour in the ſilent prayer of their minde, with compunction of hart, ſighing, and teares, crauing onely thoſe thinges of God, whiche his ſpirite ſhall put them in minde of: And chefly to begge of God the continual preſence of his grace, ſo that he forſake them not, but that it maye pleaſe him to graunte thoſe thinges vnto them whiche hys wiſedome knoweth and ſeth to be moſt expedient and profitable for them. And

ſurely

ſurely if they do perſiſt and continue in this trade and fourme aforeſayde, they ſhal not onely be vnto God dayly more and more gratefull and acceptable, but they ſhall alſo proceede dayly more and more in the increaſe of feruent charitie. and ſhal be made like vnto the heauenly and Angelical mindes, whiche dayly beholde the preſence of God. For what cauſe is there (although they remayne heere in earth, and be couered with the veſſel of mortall and corruptible fleſhe) why they ſhoulde not be called moſte lyke vnto the Angelles, when their prayer is like vnto the prayer of the Angelles: That is to ſay, they pray in ſoule and minde, and taſte in their ſoules the like ſwetenes as the Angelles do, yea, and do perceiue and feele within them ſelues the pledge and aſſuraunce of the felicitie to come, whiche the Angelles nowe already do enioy: So as they do nowe want nothing of the abſolute reſemblaunce vnto the Angelles, but only the fruition of the ioyes and glory to come, whiche ſo ſone as they be rid out

of

A godly Treatiſe.

of the wandering pylgrimage and miſtie darkenes of this woꝛlde, they ſhal enioy in heauen, with an aſſured certayne fruition and vnaduoydable poſſeſſion whiche after ſhal neuer fayle them.

FINIS.

¶ Imprinted at London for Gabriel Cawood, dwelling in Paules Churchyarde at the ſigne of the holy Ghoſt.

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